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A SICILIAN LEGACY:

OR

THE JOURNEY OF A QUARTETTE.

BY

KATE ROSS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO "M. M———"

"Why, my dear boy," he said, "I thought you were fifty miles off!"

"But you see, uncle, fifty miles is no safe distance in these days between you and your friends. They may be down on you in the space of something like one hundred minutes."

"St. Fred," said the little girl of nineteen, turning her large dark violet eyes upon her cousin, "you look to me as if you had something happy on your mind. What is it?"

"You were always a very witch at divination, Ailie. You are quite right, and it was precisely in order to deliver my mind of this happy thing that I ran down this morning."

"Then stand and deliver, St. Fred."

"Not so, my little cousin," replied St. Frederick, seating himself at the table, "your Athenian-like curiosity is not to be so lightly gratified; but if you will give me a slice of that appetising looking cold beef, and if some ale may be drunk on the premises, you shall have the news in due course—of a fact, which to me, seems stranger than fiction."

"Allow me to remind you, St. Fred, that we are not in the helpless position of your Sunday congregation, assembled to be tantalized at your discretion. You are not up in your coward's castle, you know, just now, and therefore may not say just as much as you like and no more."

"You forget, Ailie, that I have no longer a congregation to tantalize. My curacy has just expired, and I am not to enter upon my living till the spring."

"Then, papa," said the girl, "it must be one of two things—he is going to spend the interval in trying to get married, or he is coming to stay with us, to coach me up in theology."

"Neither one nor other, you rash to-conclusion-jumping girl! I mean to spend the time on my estate in Sicily."

"Or in your Castle in Spain," suggested the uncle.

"Or the one in the air," added the violet-eyed girl.

A SICILIAN LEGACY.

CHAPTER I.

THE luncheon bell had gone in a small house at Kensington. Three individuals were taking their respective seats at table in the snugly appointed dining-room, when they were unexpectedly joined by a fourth.

Now the three individuals who were "at home" were—a fine, portly, elderly man, an interesting looking girl of nineteen, a tall, pale, silver-haired lady. The elder lady and the younger one regarded the new comer (a young man of clerical aspect) with pleased surprise. "St. Fred!" cried the one, "St. Frederick!" exclaimed the other. The handsome old gentleman at the head of the table shook hands with him cordially.

see this place, and I thought it would be such a good idea for us all to go together. You would escape the gout there, you know, uncle, and Aunt Mona would have no coughs and colds, and I am sure *you* would enjoy it Ailie."

"O, immensely! intensely!" cried Ailie, clasping her hands enthusiastically.

"Mona," said Mr. Henderson, solemnly, to the pale silver-haired lady, who sat listening to her nephew in mute surprise, "Mona, let us all prepare at once to start for Colney Hatch. This young man must be raving mad to make such a proposal, and worse than that, he must have recognised us for lunatics before he thought we should be likely to turn out of our snug little home in Old England, and wander off to unknown quarters in an outlandish, brigandish place like Sicily—in the depth of winter, too!"

"But, my dear uncle, midwinter is the very time to be there, besides," &c., &c., &c.

* * * * * *

Two hours afterwards, St. Frederick (he had been playfully canonized by his cousin in virtue of his connection with the Church) took up his hat with a dejected air.

"Good-bye, uncle," he said, "I must catch the next train. My time is up, I might as well have sent my news by post, after all. If my persuasive eloquence is to have no more effect upon my future parishioners than it has had on you, they will do well to get some other man, and I may as well go and bury myself in my sulphur mine for the rest of my life. Won't you come to the station with me, Ailie? I don't know when we may walk together again."

"When do you start, Fred?" she asked him on the way.

"On Monday morning—all well."

"And this is Friday. What young lady in the world do you think could get ready for a two or three months' tour on so short a notice?"

"No young lady in the world but one,

but my faith knows no limit to her capabilities."

"Ah, but there's Aunt Mona to consider! She has a trunk as big as a little house when she goes out. I am afraid it was rather a Quixotic sort of idea of yours, that of taking us all with you, Fred—you will write me a compensation letter from all the nice places, won't you?"

"Yes, and from the other ones too."

They were descending the steps now, and the train was whistling into the station.

"And you will keep a diary?"

"Every hour, if you will care to read it. God bless you, dear Ailie, good-bye."

* * * * * *

As her father was about the last person whom Miss Ailie Henderson desired to see on her return from the station, it was in the natural contrary order of things that his portly form should be crossing the hall at the precise moment in which she entered it.

He stopped short to look at her—through his spectacles, too."

"Crying!" he exclaimed, "bless my soul, what's the girl crying for! You don't mean to say you want to go with your cousin all that ridiculous journey?"

"Want to go, papa!" cried the girl passionately, "don't you know that I have been dying to go to Italy ever since I can remember?"

"Dying, eh? Well, my dear, dying seems to agree with you pretty well, on the whole. Don't fancy you will die of it; but now I come to think of it, you certainly have been boring me from time to time to take you to all these foreign places instead of to Brighton or Eastbourne every year. But suppose now, just for the sake of talking, that I were disposed to make such a fine old English martyr of myself, as to set out on this pilgrimage with that beardless young saint, as you call him."

"I never call him a beardless young saint,

papa, and if he has not a patriarchal beard like yours, I am sure he has a very nice moustache."

"Which I'd make him shave off if I were his bishop, but that's neither here nor there. I was about to observe that if we had been such idiots as to think of going, your Aunt Mona would turn melancholy mad in those Catholic countries. Besides, the dear woman could never pack herself up."

The young lady caught at the thread of hope.

"Papa, if you could only be induced to go, the packing need be no stumbling block. I will pack everybody up myself so cleverly."

"Yes, and how many Pickford's vans would you turn out, my dear?"

"Papa, for the sake of seeing Florence, Rome, Venice, I would travel with nothing but a bundle."

"Well, you may ask your aunt if she feels inclined to go and carry a bundle, too."

"Dear Aunt Mona! she always does every-

thing I want her to do, you know she does, papa, except when you won't let her. If the decision depends on Aunt Mona, I regard it as a settled thing that we go. Oh, papa dear, you little know what a delight it will be to me to see all those places—you really will go, won't you? Seal the promise with a kiss, that I may be quite sure."

With a lightened heart, Miss Ailie Henderson ran away to find her aunt.

Mrs. Herbert was found in her usual pose, knitting in hand. She looked up wonderingly in her niece's happy excited face.

"Aunt Mona dear," said the girl, "papa has sent me to ask you if you will go with Fred, after all, to Sicily?"

"But my dear Ailie, your papa said it was impossible."

"And so did you, auntie, but that was half-an-hour ago. Papa has come to the conclusion now, that it is possible, and don't you object, there's a dear, because I do so long to go, and I should think you would

wish to go yourself, auntie, to see all those cathedrals that poor Uncle Herbert went to see."

Mrs. Herbert sighed and mused—

"It would, indeed, be a pleasure to me, though a melancholy one," she said, "to follow in the footsteps of my dear husband."

That evening a telegram was despatched to the Rev. Frederick Monckton, bidding him look well about him at Charing Cross station at a given hour on Monday, the 11th of December.

CHAPTER II.

MARCHING ORDERS.

St. Frederick failed not to obey the bidding of his telegram.

"And is this all the baggage?" he enquired admiringly, after he had accorded an enthusiastic greeting to each of his three Kensington friends in turn.

"Yes, indeed, St. Fred, only those two poor dear little portmanteaus, for Aunt Mona and myself, and that fat little Gladstone for papa. Of course the hand bags count for nothing, but I have squeezed Leigh Hunt into mine, and a few other choice spirits too."

"Then I am sure you must have had some very clever engineering. Do you know," St. Frederick continued, when the portable property and its owners had been satisfactorily arranged in the carriage, "it really seems

too good to be true, to see you all actually here. I was so down-hearted when I left you on Friday, and so pleased when I had the telegram."

Then he shook hands with them all once more.

"We are here actually, yes, it is true," said Mr. Henderson, "but we are here conditionally. You shall hear the conditions."

"I will write them down," said St. Frederick producing his note book.

"Proceed then—'Seeing that I, John Henderson, have undertaken this journey not for my own will and pleasure, neither for the benefit of my health or pocket, but rather in the spirit of a martyr, and solely for the purpose of gratifying an idle whim of my nephew's and the gipsy-like propensities of a girl called Ailie—

"Oh, papa, dear, you must be fancying yourself in the Palace of Truth," interrupted Ailie, laughing. Would not this sound much better? 'At the happy instigation of my

nephew, and from a natural desire on my own part to further the linguistical, geographical and practical education of the young lady, my daughter, I undertake this desirable tour to Sicily.' "

"I take it down in the amended form," said St. Frederick.

"Seeing that these," continued Mr. Henderson, "are the commendable motives from which I, a gentleman who 'sat at home at ease,' have turned out of my easy chair, I stipulate that I shall be allowed to conduct my travelling on the *far niente* plan. On the Rev. Frederick Monckton shall fall the onus of the journey. With him shall rest the whole responsibility of boarding, lodging, and generally doing for the party. His duty it shall be to tip the garçons, or to bully them, as occasion may require, and to conduct all parleying with the natives (as the natives whom I shall prefer addressing shall be those of my own country). So much for personal conditions. Now for relative ones. The

conditions on which I take out my excellent sister-in-law, Mrs. Herbert, known in the family circle as Aunt Mona, and my daughter, whose baptismal name of Allison has been corrupted into Ailie, are—

"1st. That they shall never betray the slightest anxiety as to the fate of their particular portion of the *impedimenta*.

"2nd. That they shall never feel warranted in expressing fatigue, fear, or curiosity, under any circumstances whatever.

"3rd. And chiefly, that they shall beware of indulging in anything approaching sentimentalism over any scenes or scenery through which they may happen to pass.

"The sole condition on which I take my nephew, the Rev. Frederick Monckton, or I may say on which I allow him to take me, is—

"That he shall suit his conversation to his honours, and not cut it out according to his cloth.

"N.B. Fines to be imposed on the infringement of any of the said conditions."

Mr. Henderson's relatives laughingly promised that for their own sakes they would fall in with the spirit of the conditions as much as in them lay. Meantime the train had started. The journey of the quartette had begun.

CHAPTER III.

THE QUARTETTE AFLOAT.

A YOUNG MAN in a clerical wide-awake and a tall lady in a fur-lined cloak, were seated on the deck of a channel packet, and were looking out to sea.

"What does the motion of the boat suggest to you, aunt?"

"Well, nothing very agreeable, Frederick. I am afraid we are to have a rough passage. It is a pity almost that we did not stay at Folkestone till to-morrow."

"When it might have been rougher still, auntie," said a young lady in their immediate neighbourhood; "but why remind people that they are in a steamer St. Fred, just when they were trying to make believe very hard that they were not. When papa comes round this way again, I shall ask him

to oblige me by fining any one who shall make the very slightest allusion to a certain marine epidemic during the next hour, or any future hours that our party may spend upon the water."

"I assure you, Ailie," said the young clergyman, in distress, "that I mentioned the motion of the boat without the least *arrière pensée* of *mal-de-mer*. It was simply a preliminary observation, for I was going to ask Aunt Mona if being in the boat did not make her think of the analogy, so true, however trite, between a vessel on the sea and human life in the world, that greater sea—like a ship in calm waters we sail smoothly along at times, buoyed up by the wave of prosperity. Then one day the wind changes, the billows of adversity roll over us, and we are all but wrecked like the—"

St. Frederick stopped in surprise, for his cousin was laughing at him, and was furthermore holding out for his special attention an empty pocket of a small satchel, "you shall

have the honour of putting in the first fine, St. Fred!"

"For?"

"For preaching! Very good style, and so original, but forbidden by the 'conditions,' you know."

"Preaching? Uncle, I appeal to you!"

The portly looking gentleman addressed as "uncle," pronounced his nephew guilty, and the first fine fell into the bag.

After a little time, to show he bore no malice, St. Fred remarked to his cousin, that she had grown very silent.

"I was thinking," she replied, "what a prosaic looking set of modern people we are here on board, in our ugly Ulsters and our hideous hats, compared with the glorious crews which once upon a time sailed and re-sailed this very channel. Ah, why could not the sun have photographed for ever on yonder cliffs the Cæsars and their legions?"

"Well, now if that is not sentimentalizing, I wonder what is!" cried both the younger

and the elder gentleman at once. St. Frederick was delighted, and held the satchel to his convicted cousin, with as great unction as if it had been a collecting bag in church. She dropped in her franc with a great appearance of *sang froid*, but with the mental resolve that her next reflections on the Cæsars should be confided solely to her note book.

"*A propos* of your sentimental *pensée*," remarked St. Fred, "what a wonderful faculty that is which the mind has of 'summoning from the shadowy past the things that once have been.'"

"Oh, yes, indeed," sighed Mrs. Herbert, thinking of her departed husband; but Mr. Henderson wanted to know if that was a Scriptural quotation.

"My dear, sir!" exclaimed his nephew, "they are lines of Longfellow's."

"Oh, are they? Well I propose that a fine be levied on quotations, from any fellow whatever. I score that against you, Fred."

"Pardon! Not so quick! The offence was

committed before the law was made. 'Sin is not imputed where there is no law.'"

"Ah, ha! That's Scripture now," cried Mr. Henderson triumphantly. "And we have you doubly, an offence of the cloth in quoting Scripture, and a quotation made after quotations were vetoed. We will trouble you for two francs, St. Fred."

St. Frederick paid, but proposed a new law for the abolition of fines.

Mr. Henderson would not agree.

"That's because you escape all the fines yourself, papa," said Miss Ailie, "how do you manage? Now I come to think of it I don't believe you speak at all."

"*Vir sapit qui pauca loquitur*," muttered her papa.

"Quotation! quotation! shouted St. Fred. Caught at last, uncle. Now will you vote for the abolition of fines?"

"Not yet, but I don't mind reducing them half-price, *Voilà un demi-franc*."

But he was not let off so easily.

After all this sharp practice, the quartette felt that conversation was becoming expensive and retrenchment desirable.

A long silence was the result.

At length it was broken by the words "poetry of motion" which fell from the lips of St. Frederick, as he sat meditating by the side of the boat.

"Please say 'poetry of *mal de mer*' at once, and be done with it," cried his cousin indignantly, opening a vinaigrette.

"My dear Ailie," he remonstrated, "I was only soliloquizing."

"Extra bye-law wanted," said Ailie's papa, "for the suppression of soliloquies."

"We shall be on very short commons, by-and-by," laughed St. Fred, "we shall be afraid of talking, not only to each other, but to ourselves."

It was almost immediately after this that Mrs. Herbert and her niece were seized with a sudden desire to inspect the cabin. As they did not return, it was presumed that the cabin

on inspection turned out all that could be desired.

Mr. Henderson soon after made to his nephew the seemingly uncalled for remark "that he believed in whisky and water."

His nephew's answer was to the effect that he had never seen reason to doubt his uncle's, orthodoxy on that particular point.

Instead of retorting, his uncle made the best of his way down the companion ladder. St. Frederick thus found himself sole survivor of the quartette on deck for the rest of the passage.

* * * * * *

"Poor Fred! What can he have done with himself all this time!" Mrs. Herbert said to her brother-in-law, as they met on emerging from their respective cabins, when Boulogne harbour had been announced.

"Don't think we need waste too much emotion in that quarter," replied Mr. Henderson, "for I left him in the vicinity of a

whole family of seal-skin jacketed young ladies, and I know nothing of St. Frederick if he has not introduced himself to them on the strength of the cut of his coat, and engaged them in conversation. I think to 'engage in conversation' is a correct clerical expression, is it not?"

When they got on deck, Mrs. Herbert sought for her nephew through her eye-glass.

"You always had the gift of discernment, John," she said, "there he is, sure enough, in the midst of the group of jackets."

"Did I not say so! I can see him with the naked eye, and judging from his animation, he is pouring forth sentiment upon sentiment, and quotation after quotation, as if there were no such things as laws, by-laws and fines."

"But I don't fancy he has been guilty of preaching, papa," said Miss Ailie, "or the girls would not be looking so pleased with him. Aunt Mona, dear, how about the baggage? Of course, I don't mean our *porte-*

manteaux, only the Gladstone bags, you know."

"If you are easy about your *portemanteaux* my dear," said her father, "I assure you I am in the most happy-go-lucky frame of mind with regard to my Gladstone."

"And as to my cousin, over there, he does not seem to have a thought beyond the things he stands up in! How delightful it is, that we can all rise superior to the ordinary anxieties of the travelling public! All the same, auntie, I have been told so much about the women porters of Boulogne, that I feel curious to see them. There they are getting into the boat, do let us go and watch them. Now, auntie, are you sorry we troubled to come? I think they look extremely picturesque with their cap frills flapping up and down every time they bend their heads. And how they chatter!"

"And how amusingly they are pitching those two sweet little *portemanteaux* about!" added the young lady's cousin, who had

quitted the neighbourhood of the seal-skins, "you see they have separated them from their companion Gladstone."

"Yes, everything after its kind is their rule, I see, like Noah's with his animals.'

"Don't quote Scripture, miss, or I shall fine you."

CHAPTER IV.

THE QUARTETTE EN ROUTE FOR PARIS.

In one corner of a railway carriage, a pale, sweet faced, silver-haired lady, with her head buried in the sable hood of her cloak.

In another, an intellectual looking young man with his clerical wide-awake arranged *à la* Brigand.

In a third, a comfortable looking, elderly gentleman with the peaked hood of his Ulster very much *à la* fool's cap.

In the fourth a girl sufficiently pretty, hooded in grey.

"The poetry of motion seems to have changed its metre," said the girl, as the carriage began rocking from side to side.

"Ah," responded the elderly gentleman, jerking helplessly about in his corner, "it is

getting very emotional and touching indeed now."

"We have exchanged the *traiime dem ocean*, for the realities of *terra firma*," quoth a voice from the direction of the clerical wide-awake.

"Don't like the poetical style of conversation," objected the elderly gentleman. "Poetry be fined! Let's have some prose."

"I can't be prosy," said the young girl.

"Nor I, out of my pulpit," said the young man.

"Then let nobody say a word to anybody, but let everybody go to sleep, and so good evening to you," said the old gentleman.

"Happy, happy thought," softly murmured the girl.

"Amen," responded the clergyman. "I fall in with the wishes of the company. Exhausted nature seeks repose—the repose of her sweet restorer, balmy sleep." His quotations escaped a fine, as there were no ears sufficiently open to hear them.

* * * * * *

When, after some hours of absence, the mind of the pale, gentle looking lady in the sable hood returned to her still travelling body, she had a difficulty in reconciling the conflicting evidences of her senses. The portly old gentleman was undoubtedly in the precise angle of the carriage in which he had been when her eyes had closed upon him, but there now issued from the same spot a strange sound, regular in recurrence, and of somewhat more volume than might arise from, say, the murmur of a shell. Whatever the music might be, there was some secret sympathy between it and the topmost peak of the elderly gentleman's Ulster hood.

The reposeful figure of a young clerical friend had gone from the opposite corner, and yet a certain rug of silver fox, which she had hitherto regarded as his exclusive property, was covering the alien knees of a very pretty little widow lady who was now her *vis-à-vis* instead.

Yet she could hear the ring of a Churchman's

voice, and following it, comprehended the situation; he was sharing the rug of the girl in grey, because he had given up his own, with his corner, to the charming little widow lady. Such is the self-denying teaching of the Church!

The gentle lady closed her eyes again, to re-open them only when the lights of Paris gleamed upon their vision.

CHAPTER V.

THE QUARTETTE IN THE JARDIN DES TUILERIES.

FINE old English gentleman; graceful elderly English lady. English girl in grey; young Englishman of clerical bearing, all steadfastly gazing on the ruined palace of The Tuileries.

"Oh, what a pitiful sight!" exclaimed the tall lady, mournfully clasping her hands.

"Yes, truly!" said the elderly gentleman, "but Mona, if you take my advice, you will clasp your hands inside your muff. I am sure there are chilblains abroad to-day. How bitterly cold it is. What does that fool in the cocked hat say?"

"He says, papa, that we must not walk upon the turf."

"Then he's not such a fool. Very considerate I am sure, I fancy it is a little damp—tell him we are much obliged."

"At the risk of being considered sentimental, and even of being fined," said the tall lady, walking slowly off the turf in front of the palace, "I must say that it really goes to my heart to see this poor ruin. Oh, just think of all the sweet, gracious faces that have looked forth from those now charred and empty window frames! And of all the stately, noble forms that have walked in these very gardens where we now see Tom, Dick, and Harry!"

"And Fred," added the young man of clerical bearing.

"Oh, pray don't class yourself with those blue blouses over there," said the young lady in grey, "I am sure the 'nobility and gentry' who used to be at home here, would have hardly enjoyed rubbing shoulders with them in their grounds, whereas Marie Antoinette or Eugénie themselves could not possibly have objected to come across such a picturesque group as our quartette. I am sure papa looks like the monarch of all he

surveys, and Aunt Mona has the air of a queen."

"And my cousin Ailie is like a little princess in disguise," said the Rev. Frederick Monckton.

"Very much in disguise in this Ulster, I should think. But you might pass in a strait for our family chaplain," she retorted.

"Ailie," said the young man seriously, "you know I am anything but a Radical."

"I should hope not, my cousin, as you are in the Church," she interrupted.

"You knew I was not speaking of that sort of Radical. I was going to say, if you would let me speak, even though I am not intrenched in my coward's castle, that although I do not entirely sympathize with the Egalité principle, I do so to a certain extent, and it rather jarred on me, Ailie, when you mentioned the blue blouses just now in so slighting a tone. Some of them are very fine fellows. When I was in Nôtre Dame this morning, one of them walked in carrying his head like an Emperor."

"Fred," said Ailie penitently, laying her hand on her cousin's arm, "I don't know why I spoke in that way. You know that I have really no stuck-up notions of that sort."

"I do know it. We have always been at one on these points, but after that little remark of yours slipped out, I wanted re-assuring."

"And you are re-assured. But don't preach at me any more, please. To be strictly conscientious, I think I ought to fine you. Now to return to the Bourgeoisie, I am glad they stick to their blouses. What is it that makes a street in France more picturesque than a street in England, than just the blue blouses of the men, and the white caps of the women, with a due mixture of black priests between. But what may be the matter with that statue, St. Fred, you seem bent on staring it out of countenance?"

The elderly English gentleman, overhearing the last words, had the curiosity to bring his eyeglass to bear on the statue indicated.

"Oh, ah," he said, "not only a single statue, Fred, but a very fine group. One, two, three, four, five of them! By Jove! I believe they are our seal-skin friends of the steamer!"

In a few minutes the seal-skins and the quartette were salaaming to each other with much politeness. St. Frederick ventured to suppose that the seal-skins had been taking Paris easy that day, as the quartette had been doing. But their guardian shook his head.

"I don't of course know," he said, "what your notion of 'taking it easy' may be, but I guess I have found it difficult enough."

"Oh, papa!" remonstrated the seal-skins in chorus.

"Well, all I know is that before I had digested my breakfast, or read the papers, I was dragged off to some church or other, where I found myself in the position of mourner for somebody whom I had never seen alive."

"Oh, papa, dear, you do see things so oddly," interrupted the elder seal-skin. You know we can always have such things as breakfasts at home, so why linger over a breakfast at Paris?"

2nd Seal-skin—"And I saw in big letters in your newspaper, papa, '*Rien ne va plus!*' so what could there have been to read?"

3rd Seal-skin, addressing the quartette—"It was very jolly at St. Roch, there was a very grand funeral going on, and just as the funeral went out, a wedding came in."

4th Seal-skin—"Then we did the Madeleine, and then Nôtre Dame, and had the good luck to get to Les Invalides at noon, just in time to see Napoleon's Tomb. It was frightfully draughty in there, and I fancy we all caught cold—at least we sneezed the whole time, but that's no matter, it was quite worth while, for we can't catch cold in Napoleon's mausoleum every day, can we papa?"

The papa said fervently that he hoped not. He also congratulated himself and family on

the fact that a daily visit to Père la Chaise would be equally impossible."

5th Seal-skin—"Oh, we had a dreadful sell at Père la Chaise!"

"Pardon," said the Rev. F. Monckton, "but I really cannot understand your being disappointed with Père la Chaise. I do not think it equal to our Highgate cemetery, but it is very beautiful nevertheless."

"Oh, yes of course, but all we wanted to see was the tomb of Abelard and Heloise, and when we had hunted for it all over the place, we found it at last under repair—all covered up, and nothing but rubbish and workmen's tools to be seen—we were savage!"

"And after?" enquired St. Fred, with elevated eyebrow.

"I had to give them some lunch," said their father "to appease them."

1st Seal-skin—"And then we were ready for the Louvre."

2nd Seal-skin—"Yes, we went through all the galleries just as fast as we could go!"

"The only sensible way," remarked Mr. Henderson.

3rd Seal-skin—"And now we have had a trot as far as the Obelisk and back, to give us an appetite for the *table d'hôte.*"

"You know how to do things, young ladies," said Mr. Henderson admiringly.

4th Seal-skin—"And we have tickets for 'Rome Vaincu' in the evening."

5th Seal-skin—"And to-morrow we continue our journey south; perhaps we may meet again."

"*Au revoir,*" said St. Fred, raising his hat with his accustomed grace, and then to his friends, "I am utterly disenchanted; one would think those girls were Americans."

"And their poor father," said Mr. Henderson feelingly, "evidently started out with them unconditionally!"

CHAPTER VI.

EN ROUTE FOR TURIN.

THE Quartette as follows—

The Rev. F. Monckton, one eye on Boedeker, the other on the mountains. Miss Allison Henderson (cousin of the same), her head out of a window, exclaiming ecstatically. Mrs. Herbert (aunt to the foregoing), composed and comfortable, knitting in hand. John Henderson, Esq. (relative of the above), also comfortably posed, nothing in hand.

"Ailie, dear, it will be such a pity if you catch cold in your head!"

"I don't think I could, aunt, if I were to try, the air is so warm, but if I did, you know, I should be only resembling Hannibal when he crossed the Alps! Do you remember the absurd picture of him in the Comic History, mounted on an elephant, and blowing his

nose with a great snow-covered flag? He might well catch cold when he was nine days on the way!"

"And Napoleon did it in four, I think, uncle?"

Uncle testily—

"My dear nephew, what can it possibly matter to me, whether he did it in four or in forty! or whether Hannibal crossed on an elephant's back or a donkey's; or whether he and Napoleon climbed arm in arm together on the very same day!"

On which Miss Henderson faced quickly round from the window.

"My dear papa, you must either be under the influence of a twinge of the gout, or—or getting a little bit into your dotage you know, yes, that's right now, go to sleep—what extraordinary men those two were, Fred! Had I been Mrs. Hannibal or Mrs. Buonaparte, I should have felt so awfully proud of my husband, after he had accomplished that feat!"

"I am not *au fait* in the domestic history of Mr. and Mrs. Hannibal, but I presume you would have preferred being Mrs. Buonaparte the second to Mrs. B. the first?"

"That is spoken maliciously, my cousin. Oh, auntie, do look at that charming waterfall tumbling down from the very top of that mountain, and do you see those rock crystals sparkling in the sun—and that odd little tower up there; and there's a beautiful clump of trees. Oh, what a lovely day it is, and what a country!"

"What a pity we cannot see out of both windows at once, my dear. My neck quite aches with twisting it about so much."

"Aunt Mona, regretting her limited powers of vision, and so murmuring against the decrees of Providence! I am surprised! and shocked!"

"St. Fred may be shocked if he likes, aunt, but I think it was a very sensible reflection. It really would be greatly more convenient when travelling if our eyes were

placed one on each side of our heads, like Plato's man as exhibited by Diogenes, Fred."

"And then you would find out that you wanted a cyclopeian one, in the centre of your forehead."

"Oh, Fred, St. Fred! Do look at those peaks! Oh, these mountains are wonderfully grand, and what a continuance of them! It seems as if we should never get out of them."

"I trust we shall," groaned a somnolent voice from a corner, "I try very hard to make believe I am in my snuggery at home, but just when I am succeeding, there comes a confounded 'look here, or look there!'"

"My martyred uncle. We apologize very much, I am sure, but remember for your consolation, that the daughter for whom you make this alarming sacrifice of snuggerism is making the most rapid progress in that hitherto much neglected branch of her education 'practical geography.'"

"Yes, papa, this is a lesson I can never forget."

"Geography 'made easy' for you, at my expense! Stick to the geography, however, and never mind about the history—the Hannibals and the cannibals, and the Buonapartes, they're a bad lot!"

"Dear papa," said Miss Ailie, *sotto voce*, "he certainly must have the gout; he always abuses everybody alive and dead when he has."

"Now, Aunt Mona, I give you warning to look well to all four knitting pins as, if lost, there might be a difficulty about finding them during the next half hour."

"Is it the great Mont Cenis tunnel, Fred? Papa is sound asleep, do read Boedeker's account of it out loud, you would like to hear it Aunt Mona, I am sure."

St. Frederick reads—

"The tunnel, 8 miles in length, &c. The air in the tunnel, although somewhat close, is not unpleasant, even when the windows are left open. The transit occupies 30 minutes."

"All the same, Fred, we will shut the windows when we come to it. It would be a pity to run any risk," said the prudent Aunt Mona.

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"Case of underground railway?" growled a sleepy voice.

"Yes, uncle, just so; only instead of emerging at Moorgate Street or the Mansion House we shall come out into some of the prettiest scenery imaginable"—which the Quartette did in the prescribed 30 minutes. But at the most romantic spots their view was spoiled by the intervention of a series of small aggravating tunnels. Just as Mrs. Herbert would have crooned her neck to peep down some wild ravine, or turned up her eyes as far as repressing lids would permit, to catch sight of some mountain top to which the sun was bidding good-night, a dark wall of rock or stone would suddenly shut out the vision.

"Nice little game of hide and seek for you, Mona!" chuckled her brother-in-law.

Mrs. Herbert laughed good-naturedly.

"And now my unlucky knitting pin has taken up the game," she said, "so you dear young people must please to join in it."

"Ah," sighed Mr. Henderson, "how I envy the dear young people!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE QUARTETTE À LA TABLE D'HÔTE—TURIN.

"WHAT do you think of your first Italian hotel, aunt?"

The question came from a young man in most becoming of round collars.

"Well, this is a pretty looking *salle-à-manger*, Fred. The walls and the ceiling are highly ornamented, but I think it a pity they had not chosen better subjects. I wonder (lowering her voice and sighing) if my dear husband stayed at this Hotel? you might try and find out in their book, Fred. His name would be sure to be inserted—the Rev. Donald Herbert, you know, of Strathbannock, N.B."

A young lady in a soft cashmere dress bent forward to speak.

"Auntie, did you ever see such comical

bread in your life?" and she held up a bundle of what looked like crisp brown pipes, which had been laid beside her plate.

"They are Turin specialities," said her cousin Fred.

"What a nice looking old waiter that is," resumed Mrs. Herbert, "he has been here probably for many years. Foreign waiters keep their places so well. I wonder if he remembers my dear husband—he seems very intelligent."

"He seems a fool," said the portly old gentleman on her left. "What does he expect me to do with this lump of fowl and this bunch of watercress? Here, waiter! *garçon*! Potatoes and bread sauce!"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"*Comment, Monsieur?*"

"Common? of course. Common potatoes and common bread sauce. What are you grinning at, St. Frederick, and why don't you tell him yourself; I shall fine you for this."

"He has gone to find some potatoes,

uncle, but I doubt he won't find the sauce. Foreigners don't seem to go in for it."

"They needn't unless they like, but I suppose we're not foreigners."

"I expect we are though, papa, ever since we landed at Boulogne. But how could you expect bread sauce to be made of bread like this?" holding up one of the before-mentioned brown pipes.

"But there are rolls as well, my dear," said her aunt.

"All outside and no inside, auntie, the Italians must have excellent teeth."

"You are right there, Ailie," said her cousin, "I don't think I ever saw an Italian, male or female, with imperfect teeth."

"How do you account for that phenomenon?"

"Toothpicks, perhaps," laughed St. Frederick, indicating the relays of the same which adorned the length of the table.

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"Oh, my dear auntie, what is the matter?" asked Ailie Henderson, as Mrs. Herbert joined her in their pretty *chambre à deuxlits* in a state of agitation.

"My dear child, I have had an opportunity of asking that respectable old waiter about my dear husband, and he says he remembers him as well as if he had seen him to-day."

"What an extraordinary memory he must have, aunt."

"Oh, he described him accurately. Just to think that he has really been in this very hotel, perhaps in this very room, Ailie!"

"As this is a room for two people, and you were not with him, auntie dear, I don't think that likely. But come (kissing her kindly), I am not going to let you sit here and get melancholy; you must come down with me to the salon."

As the two ladies were crossing the passage to the salon, the waiter suddenly darted after them, and throwing open the door, said with *empressement*—

"*Voila! Madame! Voila monsieur*, your husband! *Monsieur, voila madame!*"

A grave-looking bald-headed clergyman rose from his chair and looked at "Madame" with extreme bewilderment. Ailie Henderson, comprehending the situation, very improperly laughed. A portly old gentleman, a young clergyman who was with him, and a young priest on the other side of the room, looked on with much interest. The grave clergyman bowed to Mrs. Herbert, and said stiffly, he understood from the waiter that she had done him the honour of enquiring for him, although he was not aware of having had the pleasure of her acquaintance. Then with a pink flush overspreading her pale face Mrs. Herbert, with much dignity, explained that the waiter had entirely mistaken the nature of her enquiries. She had asked him concerning her dear husband, who had been at Turin many years ago, and the man had unfortunately understood her to mean some one now in the house. As the conversation

had been conducted in Italian-French on his part, and very English-French on hers, she supposod the mistake was not so very surprising, however painful for her, and awkward for the clergyman. The worthy man received the explanation with an air of relief, then expressed himself politely to the effect that he regretted that he had not had the pleasure of her acquaintance, as a conversation with a countrywoman would have much delighted him.

Mrs. Herbert felt bound to reply that conversation with a countryman in a strange country would be really agreeable, not only to herself, but to her friends, whereupon the portly old Englishman, whom she had designated, was constrained to relinquish his English newspaper, and offer himself up a sacrifice on the altar of sociability. The two young priests (the Catholic and the Roman Catholic) clubbed amicably together, and Ailie listening to their interesting conversation, learned more about the Turin Cathedral

than she had done by visiting it in the morning.

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Passengers from Turin to Leghorn have to bestir themselves betimes of the day. John Henderson, Esq., had just slipped himself sleepily into dressing gown and slippers, when a shrill scream, proceeding from the adjoining chamber, woke him up very thoroughly indeed. In the twinkling of an eye his head was outside of his door—just in time to catch sight of the rapidly retreating form of a waiter. He could not but connect the man with the scream. Was he making off round the end of that corridor with his daughter's watch, or his sister-in-law's money, or what? He would have raised the hue and cry, and pursued him had it not been for a "confounded" tingling in one toe; restrained by that powerful monitor, he hammered at the door of the neighbouring room. The only response was a curious half-

smothered sort of sound; he shook the door impatiently, it opened, and he beheld to his great comfort, a young lady in a rose dressing gown, seated on a couch in an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"What's all this about, pray! hysterics? eh? screaming one minute, and laughing the next!"

"Oh, papa, I did not scream, it was Aunt Mona!"

"Your aunt! I never heard her scream in my life, where is she?"

"Oh, there papa, in that bed—but pray don't look at her, or she will scream again. It was only because the young waiter looked at her that she screamed before. Poor auntie thought she would like her coffee in bed, but had not taken into account that it would be the *garçon* who would bring it. She frightened him quite as much as he frightened her. When he heard the scream he all but dropped the tray."

"She frightened me, I can tell you! Dear

dear, what a thing it is to travel with womenkind! As if it wasn't bad enough to have a touch of the gout this morning, without all this pitapatation of the heart and frigeration of the marrow-bones all about nothing!"

"I believe you are sorry, papa, to find a comedy instead of a tragedy."

"The conclusion of your comedy, Mona, will be a heavy fine—a whole Napoleon won't cover this. Did you not swear to betray no fear under any circumstances whatever?"

"I never swear, John," said a gentle voice from behind a bed curtain.

"You make other people swear, though!"

"John, will you go away, please?"

"John will be very pleased to go away."

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"Now, Aunt Mona, if all your knitting pins are packed up, we will go. The hotel omnibus is waiting."

"Yes, Fred, I am ready. Only, my dear boy, I must see that waiter first. It would

be a pity to leave him under the impression that that clergyman is my husband!"

"What the deuce does it matter, Mona!" said Mr. Henderson. But Mrs. Herbert, tnrning her deaf ear to him for about the first time in her life, walked resolutely back through the vestibule, with an anxious searching expression on her face. The waiter standing at the foot of a staircase, interpreted the expression according to his lights, and before the lady had time to address him, began in his eager way—

"Monsieur comes! He descends, behold him, madame!"

And truly before Mrs. Herbert had time to get her French in order for the important declaration she wished to make, the grave and by no means bad looking, supposed husband, was quickly coming down the stairs and wishing her good morning.

"We have no time to lose, I think," he said, on getting to the foot, and proffering her his arm. But Mrs. Herbert hung back saying she wished to speak to the waiter.

"My dear madam, excuse me, but if you wish to catch this train, you have not a moment to spare."

The poor lady thus coerced, suffered herself to be led out under the Rev. Thomas Droning's stout black arm to the omnibus in waiting at the door. Two young cousins in the recesses of its interior exchanged amused glances, and a stout elderly gentleman received Mrs. Herbert and her escort with an archly elevated eyebrow.

"How can they be so absurd?" thought the sensitive lady, while a soft pink flush tinged her delicate cheeks.

"What a very sweet faced woman," thought the Rev. Thomas Droning.

CHAPTER VIII.

A QUINTETTE IN WAITING.—DITTO IN MOTION.—DITTO REDUCED TO A QUARTETTE.

"TWENTY minutes too soon, after all," said Mrs. Herbert, regretfully, as she looked at the waiting-room clock. "I might very well have spoken to that waiter."

"I am sure I am very sorry for having hurried you so," said Mr. Droning, apologetically, "but the hotel people had so hurried me in the first place. I might have remembered the Italian habit of rousing you at six, if you are going away at nine. But I trust it was nothing of importance I prevented your saying?"

"Oh, no. It was only that I wished to set the man right about his awkward mistake of last night."

Mrs. Herbert spoke in her most matter-of-

fact tone of voice, and yet that soft pink flush insisted on suffusing her face.

The Rev. T. Droning sighed, and though that sigh was drawn by lungs which had been in exercise for over fifty years, and chiefly for evangelistic purposes, it contrived clearly enough to convey a sentimental regret on the Rev. T. Droning's part that the mistake was a mistake. But in the most conventional tone he could muster, he said—

"I have to thank that waiter for a very pleasant evening, for had it not been for the introduction which his mistake brought about, the chances are that we should have sat regarding each other, after the manner of unintroduced Britons, without exchanging a word."

"It pleases me very much that we have to stay in this waiting-room," said Ailie. "I wish English waiting-rooms were as interesting. What wonderful frescoes! What is that opposite one, Fred?"

"Don't you recognise the subject, Ailie?"

"Stay; let me think. Is that Etna or Vesuvius smoking in the background? Etna? Oh, then, I know; it must be the story of Proserpine. Of course it is; there are her companions gathering the flowers in the Vale of Enna in the foreground. That is Pluto, unmistakably, and there is Cyane supplicating him to spare Proserpine."

"What a pity," said Mrs. Herbert, "that foreign artists are so fond of pourtraying all these Pagan fables!"

"I think with you," said the Rev. T. Droning, approvingly.

"Certainly," coincided Mr. Henderson. "These foreigners are behind the age. Now in England we've got to the time of day for pictures of Nabobs eating their own special sauces, ladies doing their hair up with Mrs. Allen's hair-restorer, or smiling when their toilette is complete, over elegant sewing machines, or photographs of palatial stuck-in-the-mud hotels. Those are all designs much better calculated to educate the minds of the *communi populi.*"

"I think, uncle," said the Rev. Young Frederick Monckton, smiling, "that the *communi populi* would be quite as likely to benefit by the illustrations of the Pagan stories, if they could read their meaning aright, as by the exhibition on our walls of those high art subjects which you have just named. What, for instance, could be a prettier idea than the generally received one, that the snatching away of Proserpine under the ground is typical of the seed corn being buried in the earth; and that the restoration of the nymph during part of every year to her mother, Ceres, represents the springing of the corn above the ground again."

"*Partenza!*" shouted a clear Italian voice at the door. "*Partenza per Livorno!*"

The quartette obeyed the summons without delay.

"What a very good plan it is to stretch all these white antimacassars across the backs of the seats. What a pity they don't do the same in English railway carriages," observed Mrs. Herbert.

"What a very good job they don't!" exclaimed her brother-in-law. "Bad enough to have them on every easy-chair and sofa at home, I should think. I would ten times rather see the Macassar oil than the antimacassars, and so would any other sensible man."

"Then I fear I am not a sensible man," remarked the Rev. T. Droning, "for I quite agree with Mrs. Herbert."

"Auntie, dear," said Miss Ailie, "suppose you drop your knitting, and take to crocheting antimacassars for railway carriages. I think you would be obliged to do so if such an unlikely event as my ever getting married were to happen, because you would have no one to hunt up your wires."

"Ailie," said her cousin, "you can talk about knitting and crochet-work at home, and your wedding, too, if you like. Tell me what you thought of Turin."

"Well, St. Fred, I don't think I quite 'take to' Turin. The 'feeling' of it to me was

heavy and formal, but I admired that splendid piazza."

"Of course you saw the quaint Palazzo Madama, and the Royal Palace, and the Cathedral and Museum, and the Cemetery? I was much interested in the tomb of Silvio Pellico," said the Rev. T. Droning.

"Oh!" said Ailie, regretfully, "we did not go to the Cemetery. I did not know Silvio Pellico's tomb was there. Why did you not tell me, Fred? You know I regard Silvio as one of my special friends, because his account of his imprisonments was the first Italian book I ever read."

"If you had studied your Boedeker, Miss Ailie, as I requested you to do, you would not have had this disappointment. Shall we turn back, uncle, and visit the Cemetery?"

"Not if I know it. I shall get there soon enough," growled that poor gentleman, who was again aware of the presence of the enemy in his toe. But the sleep of which he had been bereft in the morning mercifully overtook

him now, and for aught that he was aware to the contrary, the favourite easy-chair of his snuggery might have been the means of his conveyance to Genoa.

Mrs. Herbert looked equally at home, knitting in her corner.

The Rev. T. Droning constituted himself guardian of her knitting pins.

Miss Ailie Henderson being thus off duty, devoted herself to a favourite author, trusting to St. Frederick and his Boedeker to call her attention to anything specially attractive outside.

But as they neared Genoa, the character of the villages became so thoroughly Italian, that Ailie was fain to close her book and give herself up solely to the contemplation of the fantastic houses, painted and ornamented so gaily on their outer walls. Turning to attract her aunt's notice to the exterior of a villa exceptionally brilliant in reds and browns and blues, she was not a little surprised to see that lady in the act of laying her shapely

hand on the clerical cuff of the Rev. T. Droning.

"You travelled eight years ago with a Scotch minister," she was saying, eagerly, "and his name was Herbert?"

"The Rev. Donald Herbert, and a very good fellow he was. We exchanged cards at parting, and he said that if I was ever in the neighbourhood of Strath—Strath—"

"Strathbannock! Oh, my dear sir, it was, it was my dear husband!"

"My dear madam! What a coincidence! Strathbannock is certainly the address on the card. I have it still. We parted at Paris, after travelling from Rome together, and he hospitably said that I might be sure of a welcome at Strathbannock, from both himself and his wife."

"And I was that wife, Mr. Droning, but my dear husband lived only about a year after his return!"

Poor Mrs. Herbert's tears fell fast at the sorrowful reminiscence.

"Dear, dear! how very sad," said Mr. Droning, much interested, but wishing privately that his memory of his brother traveller had not been so clear. Mrs. Herbert, however, brushed away the tears, and begged Mr. Droning to tell her all the details he could remember about his homeward journey.

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"What a very sweet woman your sister-in-law is!" remarked Mr. Droning to Mr. Henderson, as the two gentlemen led the way along the platform of the station at Genoa.

"Sweet? There's not an acidulated drop in her veins, sir!"

"She must have made an admirable clergyman's wife."

"Oh, they were a model couple. He looked after the heads and the hearts of the flock, and she kept all the black sheep in stockings—wonderful mania for knitting that woman has!"

"She evidently still mourns for her husband very deeply."

"Ah, that's her only fault, there's a little too much about her dear husband, otherwise I consider her loss our gain. That's correctly put, I think, Mr. Droning?"

"Quite correctly enough for me to fine you for quoting Scripture, my dear papa," said Miss Ailie, coming to the front, and opening the satchel pocket consecrated to the fines. Just be kind enough to put in one of those nice little Italian bank notes, which St. Fred gave you such a bundle of this morning. Imagine, auntie, what a grand appearance it has to present people with bank notes, value ninepence halfpenny or even fourpence three farthings. That's what I call an Italian effect. You are a long time finding that lira, papa."

"I have enough trouble to walk straight as it is! If I were to put my hand in my pocket, I should go off my balance, and double up like a camp stool."

"I am sorry to say we part here," said Mr. Droning.

"Sorry, too," said Mr. Henderson, "it would suit my complaint very well to stop short here, but that mercenary young clergyman there, my nephew, is hurrying on to Leghorn to see some man of business there. So we don't do Genoa till we are on our return journey—if we ever have the good luck to return."

"Which I sincerely hope you all may," responded Mr. Droning; he put in the word all, but he looked only at one member of the quartette, the gentle sweet-faced, silver-haired lady.

"If it were not that I have an appointment at Genoa this evening," added Mr. Droning, "I should have begged you to tack me on to your party as far as Naples, but I shall hope at any rate that we may meet there."

"And if not," said Mr. Henderson, as they shook hands, "you have the address of a small house at Kensington, where you must

some day enquire within for two quiet orderly individuals, to wit, my sister-in-law and myself, and one noisy disorderly individual, to wit, my daughter."

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"Not such a bad fellow for a parson, Mona," quoth Mr. Henderson, following with his eyes the retreating black back of their late *compagnon de voyage.*

"I think he is a good man," said Mrs. Herbert, "and I like his Low ideas."

CHAPTER IX.

A MEDLEY, CONSISTING CHIEFLY OF LEIGH HUNT, GOUT, AND FLIGHTS OF FANCY.

After refreshing themselves on the bolting principle with some begarlicked *bifstecks* in the ornate refreshment-room at the Genoa station, our quartette put themselves again *en route* for Livorno. But they could not settle themselves so comfortably as usual. Mr. Henderson shuffled about in his corner, the victim of an English gout and a Genoese indigestion. Mrs. Herbert, slightly tearful and extremely *distraite*, dropped her knitting pins continually. The Rev. F. Monckton took out his note-book, and absorbed himself in unclerical looking calculations.

Miss Ailie Henderson, with disapprobation written in her face, looked steadily out of her window, without however appearing to

see very much just at first. But soon a change for the better came o'er the spirit of her dream.

"Ah, now!" she cried, "now I feel that I am in Italy! Dear auntie, never mind your knitting pins, but come and look! Do you see? A real orange garden! Oh, how beautiful the fruit is among the dark glossy leaves! And look at those enormous lemons!"

"And now, Ailie," said her cousin, shutting up his note-book, "you have your first peep of the Mediterranean!"

"Oh, my dear Fred, where?" cried the girl, eagerly bending forward. "Oh, yes, yes, the real true Mediterranean, and it is blue. Just as blue as they say—and yet did you ever see anything so exquisitely green as those pools by the rocks! What a lovely bay! and how good of the railway company to skirt the coast in this way. Oh, how very delightful! They are going to call a halt!"

"The deuce they are!" cried her father,

"they've no right to stop, there's no station!"

"Oh, no papa, they are merely pausing to enable us to realize where we are. Auntie dear, is it not delicious? Listen, we can hear each pretty wave running up the sands, and laughing, and running back again—and hark! Oh, how nice of him, whoever he is!"

"Who? what, Ailie?" asked St. Frederick quickly.

"Don't you hear? some one is whistling so softly, a sweet Italian air. If I shut my eyes, I shall fancy it is a siren singing on the rocks. Oh, all this is just like dreamland, and yet it is daylight reality! Papa, I do wish you would enjoy it! you really must come and sun your face for just a minute at our window."

With considerable groaning and grumping, and on pretence of ascertaining the cause of the detention of the train, he did so.

"If I had to go home now," said Ailie, "without seeing anything else, I should be

content. This alone is worth all the trouble of the journey!"

"I beg to differ," said her father; "also to fine you for sentimentalizing to a very serious extent."

"When you pay your last fine, papa, I will pay mine."

"You are as enthusiastic over the Mediterranean, Ailie, as Leigh Hunt himself," said St. Frederick.

"Poor Leigh Hunt," observed Mrs. Herbert, "he had trouble enough to get to it!"

"You are right, auntie, I have just been going over that part of his autobiography. He sailed from Ramsgate on the same date that we left Charing Cross (the 11th of December, you know) and he never saw the Mediterranean till the 26th of May!"

"Poor man!" said Mrs. Herbert. "What a sad time; tossing about in that wretched little sailing vessel, his wife ill, and all those children and the goat swarming about in the cabin! Shelley did not foresee all that when

he wrote him from Italy to 'put his music and his books on board a boat, and he would have no more trouble.' "

"Few men would have kept their enthusiasm warm in his circumstances," said St. Frederick.

"And yet hear how he raves about it," said Ailie. "I know Aunt Mona would like her memory refreshed; so please don't listen, papa, or at any rate don't fine me for reading: 'What a crowd of thoughts face one on entering the Mediterranean! Countless generations of the human race, from three-quarters of the world, with all the religions, and the mythologies, and the genius, and the wonderful deeds, good and bad, that have occupied almost the whole attention of mankind, look you in the face from the galleries of that ocean floor, rising one above another till the tops are lost in heaven. The water at your feet is the same water that bathes the shores of Europe, of Africa and of Asia, of Italy and Greece and the Holy Land, the lands of

chivalry and romance; pastoral Sicily, the Pyramids and old Crete, and the Arabian City of Alcairo glittering in the magic lustre of the thousand and one nights. This soft air in your face comes from the grove of "Daphne by Orontis;" these lucid waters that part from before you like oil, are the same from which Venus arose, pressing them out of her hair. In that quarter Vulcan fell, "Dropt from the zenith like a fallen star," and there is Circe's island and Calypso's, and the promontory of Plato, and Ulysses wandering, and Cimon and Miltiades fighting, and Regulus crossing the sea to Carthage.' (But you don't care much about all those folks, auntie, so we turn over to) 'We were now sailing up the angle of the Gulf of Genoa, its shore looking as Italian as possible with groves and white villages . . . The queen-like city of Genoa, crowned with white palaces, sat at the end of the gulf as if to receive us in state; and at two o'clock, the waters being as blue as the sky and all hearts rejoicing, we

entered our Italian harbour, and heard Italian words.' (And now, Fred, hear this), "*Va bene*," said the pilot. "*Va bene*," thought I indeed. "All goes well" truly. The words are delicious, and the omen good. My family have arrived so far in safety; we have but a little more voyage to make, a few steps to measure back in this calm Mediterranean. The weather is glorious; Italy looks like what we expected. In a day or two we shall hear of our friends; health and peace are before us.'"

"Ah! he was a good, genial, loveable soul," said Mrs. Herbert.

"There was a large-hearted, unselfish kindliness about him," said St. Fred. "One always regrets in reading his books that he is not still alive, and that one cannot have him for a friend. But here comes a tunnel."

"Tunnels *versus* reading," quoth Mr. Henderson. "Of two evils choose the least. I am resigned."

"That is fortunate, uncle, as we have

something like thirty-eight of those 'lesser evils' before us. This line is very cleverly engineered."

"I never had such a beautiful railway ride in my life," said Ailie.

"On the return journey, all well," said her cousin, "you will have just such another from Genoa to Nice. Indeed the Riviera di Ponente is considered finer than this Riviera di Levante."

"And here are more houses 'enriched with painted decorations,' as the guide-book says. But what a shame, auntie, to see them all, or nearly all, disfigured like that! How can they be so cruel as to hide those grand designs and frescoes with those ugly lines of linen hung across the walls. If I were Victor Emmanuel, I should exact fines for every flag of that sort displayed."

"Ailie, I believe that is Lerici, where poor Shelley lived in a villa on the coast, and Via Reggia is somewhere near, where his body was washed ashore, with that little book of

Keat's, which Leigh Hunt had given him, in a pocket. You remember? He told Leigh Hunt, when he gave it him, that he would return it with his own hand, and as that was not to be, Leigh would take it from no other, and so the little volume was burnt along with the body."

"Find the piece about the cremation, St. Fred, and read it to us, please," said Mrs. Herbert. "It is very melancholy; but your uncle is dozing, so we shall not be called to task."

St. Frederick obediently found the place, and read—

"None of the mourners refused themselves the little comfort of supposing that lovers of books and antiquity like Shelley and his companion (Mr. Williams)—Shelley in particular, with his Greek enthusiasm—would not have been sorry to foresee this part of their fate. The mortal part of him, too, was saved from corruption—not the least extraordinary part of his history. Among the materials for

burning, as many of the gracefuller and more classical articles as could be procured—frankincense, wine, &c.—were not forgotten. And to these Keats' volume was added. The beauty of the flame arising from the funereal pile was extraordinary. The weather was beautifully fine. The Mediterranean, now soft and lucid, kissed the shore as if to make peace with it. The fellow sand and blue sky were intensely contrasted with one another—marble mountains touched the air with coolness; and the flame of the fire bore away toward heaven in vigorous amplitude, waving and quivering with a brightness of inconceivable beauty. It seemed as though it contained the glassy essence of vitality. You might have expected a seraphic countenance to look out of it, turning once more before it departed to thank the friends that had done their duty."

"From that, one would think Leigh Hunt would have gone in for cremation himself, and yet his desire was to be buried in Kensal Green."

"And I am glad he is there," said Mrs. Herbert. "It does one good to go and look at the sweet face of his bust, and to read 'Here lies one who loved his fellow men.'"

"Look, St. Fred," said his cousin, "what a picture those Italian women make washing the linen down by the rocks."

St. Frederick put his head out of the window to look, and his uncle, whom every one had supposed to be asleep, confidently affirmed that he had caught him kissing his hand to them.

"Oh, papa!" cried Ailie.

And "Oh, uncle!" cried St. Frederick, "I was simply smoothing my moustache!"

As "*il treno*" approached Spezia, an exclamation of delighted astonishment escaped the lips of Mrs. Herbert.

"Of all the sunsets I have seen," she said, "this is the loveliest. Did you ever behold such colours as those on the Appenine tops? Look at those rosy clouds, Ailie, like brilliant crowns resting on their snowy heads."

"Auntie, it is like only one thing—a vision out of heaven."

"And yet, Ailie, it saddens me."

Presently three of the quartette were considerably surprised to hear the voice of their fourth member repeating for their benefit the following effusion—

> "Oh could I climb those mountains there!
> I'd sit a top like a grizzly bear,
> My song should be begone dull care;
> Gout, books, and all ills to which flesh is heir!"

"I can't exactly discover where that tremendous sentiment comes from, sir, or I would propose a fine extraordinary for such an *outré* quotation."

This from Mr. Henderson's nephew, who was still smarting under his uncle's late libel.

"Quotation, sir! it's an impromptu, suggested by your aunt's and my daughter's ecstacy over the sunset. Beat it if you can. If not, hand me over the prize out of the fine moneys."

"Oh, but we will beat it," said Ailie, "come, auntie, try."

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"Mine is a sentimental one I am afraid," said her aunt, after a short pause.

"Never mind, we must have it."

"Never again! Ah, never again
Can I see the red sun set o'er mountain and plain,
Without memory pricking my heart with this pain
That my life's sun has set and will ne'er rise again."

"Sentimental did you say Mona? Rather—only I am sure it has a true poetical ring about it, for I'm blest if I know what it means! Yours ready, Fred?"

"Well, not very ready, but here it is in the rough,

"The rosy and the purple lights,
Fall warm and kindly on yon heights;
The snows beam back with happy smile,
But the lights may rest but a little while,
They are bound to follow in Phœbus' train,
And the heights turn cold and white again.
As the heights lit by these fleeting rays,
So would I have it with my days;
I would fain keep them white and clear as snow,
The pleasures of life to come and go,
Warming them, cheering them, but only so
As to leave them again pure as the snow."

"Ha, ha, boy! all very fine! no smell of the sulphur there, eh? But I appeal to the ladies. Are the sentiments of St. Frederick to be compared to mine, even though I dare-say he stole them from some old hymn book?"

"Oh, papa dear, comparisons are odious, we'll have no comparisons."

"Well, then, my dear, let us have your little sentiment instead."

"Oh, certainly.

> "I think if I dwelt on yon mountain high,
> I would ride on a rose cloud into the sky;
> And beg the old saints who were flying about,
> To tell my papa of their cure for the gout."

Miss Henderson's impromptu was received, if not with hisses and groans, at least with cries of "oh, oh," from the benches occupied by her aunt and cousin, but her papa said it came next to his own in merit, and that they two would draw lots for the prize.

"I must own Ailie, laughed her cousin, that its sentiment has one merit, to wit—unselfishness, for I doubt you would not find

the rose cloud an over comfortable conveyance, however elegant its appearance."

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"Leghorn at last, the 'polite Wapping,' as our friend Leigh Hunt called it," said St. Frederick, collecting the baggages.

"I am thankful to say we have arrived, John," said Mrs. Herbert, hurrying her knitting into her bag, "we are all so tired and hungry; but you look as if you did not want to move out of that corner."

"Don't believe I've strength enough left in me to do it," returned her brother-in-law, making violent efforts, however, and shaking his head at his nephew.

"I shall fine you for this, Frederick, you're as bad as Moses, bringing out people to starve in the wilderness."

"Don't murmur at this eleventh hour, uncle, you shall have some quails presently. But we must manage better next journey."

"We must, indeed," said Mrs. Herbert,

"after this experience we will always take a hamper."

"Poor papa," said Ailie, "you have not been quite happy to-day."

"No, there's been a little too much Leigh Hunt, and a good deal too much gout, my dear."

CHAPTER X.

AT LIVORNO, THE "POLITE WAPPING."

FIRES were not considered necessary in the public rooms of a certain Leghorn Hotel on the 16th December; but our quartette thought fit to establish one in their snug private salon. This fire was very much to the mind of Miss Ailie Henderson, chiefly for the reason that it was about as unlike as possible to the fires she was accustomed to see in the "little house at Kensington." She therefore much interested herself in watching the glowing logs disposed across the iron bars of dogs, supported in their turn by well-carved figures of the sphinx, sitting always calmly superior under whatever trying conditions of heat might be brought to bear upon them. On the morning of the said 16th, Miss Ailie found herself the first

member of the quartette who had put in an appearance in the little salon. Establishing herself in front of the open hearth, she found congenial employment in re-arranging the wood according to her own devices. But presently a firm hand on her shoulder arrested her work—

"Good morning Ailie."

"*Buon giorno*, St. Frederick."

"Ailie, when you were a little girl, when you said good morning you always gave me a kiss, and now—now you don't, you know."

"When I was a little girl, St. Fred, you were a little boy, and now, now you are canonized, you know!"

"Your logic won't stand the morning light, Ailie. The early Christians always kissed each other, even without being cousins, and I am your cousin, and I shall kiss you Ailie.

He did, and the instant after, a short dry cough, and a hobbling step were audible in the room.

"Smoothing your moustache again? Eh,

Fred? What has that poor sphinx done, Ailie, that you should batter her head with the tongs in that remorseless manner?"

"Papa," said Ailie, without, however, looking at him, "please don't be absurd. How is your gout?"

"As to the gout, the sooner you take that little trip on the rose cloud to make enquiries about the perfect cure, the better. As to absurdity, that is another matter, *I* have done nothing absurd."

"Now, papa," said Ailie, facing him bravely, "you will go on teasing me for a year and a day, just because you saw St. Fred kiss me! but you know quite well it is no worse to kiss my cousin than it is to kiss you."

"I'll be bound it isn't! *vous avez* 'reason,' as the French say."

The old gentleman, gout or no gout, was in one of his most quizzical moods, and it was merely in consequence of the entrance of Mrs. Herbert and the breakfast directing his at-

tention to fresh channels that his daughter escaped his further badinage.

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"Well," said St. Frederick, "now that we have knocked breakfast off the day's programme, how is the rest to be filled up? I must spend half an hour or so at the solicitor's, after that, at your service."

"Papa," proposed Ailie, "let us take a carriage out to Monte Nero, to Lord Byron's house and Smollett's."

"If there were the slightest chance of finding those excellent gentlemen 'at home,' my dear, I should be delighted, I am sure, but I am under an impression that they left some time ago."

"You don't want to go, papa, so I vote that we have a nice do-nothing day. Does that 'meet your views,' auntie? Of course we will allow you to knit if you like." Mrs. Herbert's countenance fell.

"My dear, is it not a pity I lost one of

those wires in my hurry last evening? I knew it soon afterwards, but did not wish to make a fuss about it."

"That explains your looking so unhappy, auntie, but foreign women knit, so we shall be sure to match it."

Miss Henderson carried out her do-nothing idea by establishing herself at the salon window, and contemplating the statue of the Grand Duke Ferdinand and the passers-by. The women especially amused her by the way in which they tied up their heads in coloured handkerchiefs, or in black or white worsted veils, also by the expanse of white stocking, which their peculiar style of holding up their skirts revealed. Presently a regiment of Bersaglieri defiled along the harbour, to music of a tin-trumpety, not over-inspiring order. The soldiers were very white looking about the head and the feet, and very blue as to the rest.

After the military procession, came a funereal one. The mourners who followed the

coffin had black draperies thrown over their heads which reached to their feet; they were thus completely hidden with the exception of their eyes, which looked through two round holes. The effect was so lugubrious, that Ailie concluded she had been long enough at the window, and moved away. When her cousin returned, he was gratified at the alacrity with which she prepared to set out with him on a walk to the Mole. The Livornian flymen and boatmen, who do not approve of pedestrian feats, beset the two young people before and behind, and on every side, with offers of conveyances for land or water. Like true-born Britons, the cousins declined to embark in either, nevertheless one persistent Livornese drove his chariot wheels beside them for at least a quarter of a mile.

"Ailie," said St. Frederick, when at length they paced the Porto Nuovo in peace, enjoying the sea breeze and the view of the islands, "Ailie, oblige me by imagining that

yonder boat is the Bolivar, and that Lord Byron is seated in it."

"Certainly, Fred; I see his eyes in a fine frenzy rolling, and I note his untidy collar."

"Good, and now you must turn this way, and recognize those two old friends of yours on the quay. The tall dark man is one, Leigh Hunt, and the tall fair fresh looking young man with whom he is shaking hands is a Mr. Shelley, who has just landed in his yacht from Lerici.

"Oh, yes, Fred, I see them both plainly."

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Next morning, Sunday though it was, the Rev. F. Monckton expressed a wish that the quartette should visit Pisa, which was only a short run by rail, but his uncle affirmed positively that no one should see John Henderson flying in the face of Providence, by going sight-seeing that day.

"Oh, but papa, you *will* come to Pisa—the leaning tower, you know!" cried Ailie.

"Crooked old thing! Don't I see it every day of my life in the cabinet at home? (Poor Donald brought it me, you know, Mona.) No thank you, corkscrew staircases don't suit my complaint. When I am well off I keep so, as long as I can, therefore I stay here to-day; it's a very decent hotel. That sensible Dutchman of a waiter speaks something resembling English, instead of jabbering at you like an idiot. Let those go who like, I shall survive the solitary confinement, especially if you could lend me one of your Sunday books, St. Fred; you won't require them to-day. One about the Early Christians wouldn't be amiss. I hear their habits were very interesting, eh?"

"My dear John, what on earth do you mean?" enquired Mrs. Herbert.

"Oh, St. Frederick understands me. As a priest, of course, he knows a great deal about the Early Christians."

Mrs. Herbert looked across the table to St. Fred, and was surprised to see that young

man twisting his moustache in confusion, while Miss Ailie beside him was visibly blushing. But Mrs. Herbert's consideration was greater than her curiosity, therefore she did not pursue the enquiry, but said that for her part, if she might also be allowed to stay at home, she would rather do so.

"Aunt Mona," said St. Frederick earnestly, "tell me this, do you stay because you do not think it right to go on Sunday?"

"My dear Frederick, you know I lived so long among—"

"The straitest sect of the Pharisees," put in Mr. Henderson.

"That's right, papa, hand me another lira, please," interposed his daughter.

"Among the strait-laced Presbyterians of Scotland," continued Mrs. Herbert, "that I have not yet got out of their ways (smiling); but my dear, I know that your conscience allows you in this, or you would not propose it. And abroad especially it is not the fashion to regard Sunday as we did in Scotland. But

that is not altogether what keeps me back. Pisa would be a very trying place to me. It delighted my dear Donald so much—almost more than any other town, and he has so often described it to me, that in walking there I should feel as if he were by my side, and, indeed, should be but sorry company for any one else."

The poor lady dropped a tear, and hurried from the room.

"Ailie," said her cousin, "on me alone will fall the heavy responsibility of taking you to Pisa."

"I am sorry to go with anybody who regards me as a dead weight, but I cannot make up my mind to stay at home!" she replied.

"I feel after that, Ailie, as if I ought to say something very polite, but if we are to catch the train, I must postpone it till we get under way; and may I request that you will not be *longer* than usual in putting on your hat; also that you will just for once

forego the fascinations of the passage window, and take for granted that the oranges in the garden beneath are looking very much the same as when you came down to breakfast?"

CHAPTER XI.

A SABBATH DAY'S JOURNEY.

NOTWITHSTANDING St. Frederick's alleged sense of responsibility, he took out the tickets for Pisa with a sufficiently cheerful countenance, and no one would have imagined from the easy grace of Ailie's buoyant step, that she was troubled by the consciousness of being a dead weight. Indeed, none of the voluble, gesticulating natives of the land, who shared their carriage, appeared more perfectly light-hearted than those two young English people.

The day was gloriously fine, the far off mountains rose up clear and golden in the bright morning sunlight, and the trees of the wood through which the train sped, looked strangely green for December. Along some parts of the route, the Strada Ferrata ran parallel with the high road. There was little

traffic upon it at that hour, but as St. Frederick and his cousin gazed out, they conjured up a certain carriage or carriages, which had rolled along it one certain summer day, some fifty-four years before, bearing away from Leghorn the Hunt family, with their friend Mr. Shelley, who was going to see them "fixed" in their new home at Pisa. They heard in imagination the animated tone of the two literary friends engaged in congenial conversation, and the happy voices of the children exclaiming over such foreign novelties of nature as met their eye by the way.

"We must look out at Pisa for the Casa Lanfranchi, Fred, which the Hunts shared with Lord Byron."

"And where Byron sat up at night writing 'Don Juan,' under the inspiration of gin and water—yes, and when we are in the cathedral, Ailie, we must think of poor Shelley, who was there the last afternoon of his life, that afternoon which Leigh Hunt mentions as the

'delightful one' spent with Shelley wandering about Pisa, and visiting the cathedral. How would they have parted had they known they were never to meet in life again!"

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Very sharply defined in the clear atmosphere leaned the unique Campanile of Pisa that Sunday morning. Familiar as Ailie Henderson was with its cabinet model at home, the original took her very much by surprise, being infinitely more beautiful and extraordinary than she had anticipated. Her cousin, a keen appreciator of beauty in any form, was equally delighted. With great goodwill, they toiled up the 294 steps to the top, and had their reward in a never-to-be-forgotten view of mountains, plains and sea; while from the Piazza del Duomo, at the foot of the Tower, rose its beautiful companions, the Cathedral and the Baptistry, looking fresh and pure, as if their marble glory had but just issued from the architect's hand.

"Look down now, Ailie," said St. Frederick, "on the town of Pisa. Try and realise that it is the year 180 B.C., and that stately Roman citizens are walking down there, very proud of their little colony, and discussing the respective merits of the Temple of Minerva and the theatre which have just been finished. You can see them?"

"Oh, distinctly; but the sight of so much antiquity makes me feel quite ashamed of being so new myself."

"Well, pass over ten hundred years or so, look out to your Mediterranean, and what see you?"

"Well, not very much, to tell the truth, Fred."

"Oh, but you can if you will look long enough. The whole fleet of Pisa ought to be coming gradually within your line of vision; for it has just set sail for Sardinia to oust the infidel Saracens from that isle, in favour of enlightened Christian Pisans."

"You have remarkable eyesight, Fred, for distant objects."

"It is fortunately equally good for near ones, Ailie," he replied, giving her at the same time so cousinly a look of admiration, that one of two English sailors, who happened to be sharing the tower platform, said to the other in a *sotto voce*, meant to be private and confidential—

"Mate, Parson 's on his wedding tower."

"What tower does he say it is, Ailie?" asked her cousin, with a mischievous smile.

Ailie, looking steadily out to sea again in the direction of the dim Pisan fleet, said she had not the least idea, upon which she was told that she was a naughty little girl, whose rosy-red cheeks betrayed that she was telling stories, and that she should not be talked to any more. She was accordingly left to her meditations, and her cousin talked to the sailors instead. They did not happen to have a Boedeker in their pocket, and so were obliged to the young "parson" for some information out of his ever-present edition, respecting the Campanile.

He read to them that the idea of it had

originated in the brain of a Pisan named Bonanus, who, assisted by a German, William of Innsprück, began to build the edifice. But these artists had little idea of the world's wonder they were creating, for it was not finished in their lifetime, nor indeed for 200 years afterwards, as it was not until 1350 that one Tommaso Pisano had the honour and satisfaction of completing it. Whether he had the supreme excitement of adding the finishing touches in a gingerly and experimental way, trying how much its obliquity would bear, and fearing the last straw might break the camel's back—or whether he finished it on the perpendicular, and had at some future time the shock of witnessing the astounding "slanting-dicular" it had assumed, is a question not yet decided by the savants, or Boedeker.

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"The echo of the whispering gallery of St. Paul's, in London, is not to be compared to this, Fred!" said Ailie, softly.

The cousins were standing now in the interior of the Baptistry. The custodian had sounded a key note, and the full chord had been given by mysterious echoes of the most exquisite sweetness, whose vibrations were still trembling round the smooth marble pillars of the galleries before dying away in the dome.

"I really did not think," said St. Frederick, "that any earthly sound could be so sweet."

"I don't believe it is an earthly sound," replied Ailie, who stood with her hands clasped in an ecstasy. "The note that was struck ascended to the dome—the dome points heavenwards. May not some electric current have brought down from heaven those delicious tones of the echo?"

St. Frederick shook his head.

"A more sentimental than scientific idea, Ailie."

"I shall keep it, nevertheless, Fred."

"It is your own. Now we must hear what this man has got to say about this immense

font, and we must look at Nicolo Pisano's work on the pulpit."

"Oh, St. Fred, dear, what a magnificent pulpit! Now think what charming sermons you would be obliged to preach out of such a pulpit, if it were in your own church! Oh, Fred, I wonder what sort of sermons you do preach? Very nice ones, I dare say. And I have never heard one of them! I, who would appreciate them better than anybody else. No, no, I don't mean that; but I should like to hear you, Fred, and to see how you look in the pulpit."

"My dear Ailie, when I get my church, as I hope to do in the Spring, I trust you will often, often do so, not one Sunday, but every Sunday."

"Hush, dear," said Ailie, gently interrupting him, "we must listen to this man."

But when the man had said his say, and they had examined with much interest the ancient sculptured ornaments of the said

pulpit, nothing would content Ailie less than her cousin's mounting it.

"Now you may preach to me," she said, "and I won't fine you, unless you exceed fifteen minutes. The man won't hear; he is in tow with some other people at the door, and if he should hear, he would not understand. But dear me, Fred, you look for all the world like a Methodist minister, without a surplice. I shall expect you to lead off with 'What is treuth,' like Charles Dickens' Mr. Chatband."

But St. Frederick, clearing his voice and fixing his eye on Ailie with great gravity, began with an emphatic "Dearly beloved." And he went no further, for as the words fell from his lips, a twittering and giggling noise greeted the ears of the cousins, and on looking to see where the sounds came from that so grated on their ears after the late harmonies they had been listening to, they saw to their confusion, clustering round the other side of the pulpit, five smart young ladies in seal-skin

jackets and caps, who saluted them with another volley of mirth when the recognition had taken place.

"I thought we should fall in with each other again!" exclaimed one young lady. "But just fancy our meeting like this! Oh, pray don't come down (to St. Frederick). You look very well up there, and we should love to hear you preach."

"That would be too bad," said a sister, "to make him work when he is out for a holiday."

"You are not at our hotel, I think?" said another of the family.

"We are all staying at Leghorn," replied St. Frederick. "My cousin and myself are merely here for the day."

"Oh, you are his cousin, are you?" said the girl, turning to Ailie. "We thought you were not his sister. How awfully jolly!"

"Awfully jolly that she has not the misfortune to be my sister?" enquired St. Frederick.

"Oh, no! I meant it was so jolly to be out on your own hook, you know, without the old folks."

"Thank you," said their father.

"Now, pa, dear! Of course we didn't mean you!"

St. Frederick turned to the father, and enquired how he liked Pisa.

"Oh, rum old place! Only came last night; but it has one recommendation, at any rate. All the 'lions' are together, up in this corner. Wish they'd arrange the show places everywhere else in the same way; save no end of time and bother."

"Isn't the Tower a 'cure'?" said the youngest girl to Ailie. "Been to the Cathedral yet? What splendid things they have there! Did you admire the angels by Galileo?"

"Galileo, nonsense; Ghirlandajo you mean," corrected an elder sister, "Galileo only made the bronze lamp."

This was quite too much for St. Frederick.

"Pardon," he said, "but I think our infallible Boedeker tells us that the connection between Galileo and the long swinging lamp was only this—that its swaying suggested to him the motion of the pendulum."

"Oh! ah, yes, that's it. But one can't remember everything. Papa has a guide-book, but it's such a nuisance, always turning it up. We generally make him keep it in his pocket. What, going away? We shall all go directly. There doesn't seem much to look at here. We might as well go now."

"Oh, no!" cried Ailie, hastily. "You really ought not to miss hearing the echo."

"Oh, ah! To be sure! We have not heard that yet. The man was just going to begin it, when we recognised you and ran away from him. Been to the Campo Santo? Going? Oh, well, so are we. We shall join you directly."

But when the cousins found themselves again in the open Piazza del Duomo, they agreed that two things might enhance their

appreciation of the Campo Santo, viz., a little bodily refreshment before going in, and the absence from its sacred enclosure of five seal-skin jackets. They therefore turned out of the Piazza, and wended their way to the "Lung Arno," passing through many a silent grass-grown street, with rows of tall houses on either side; while between, a frequent glimpse into some quaint courtyard would seem to lift them entirely out of their own period, and throw them back into some long bygone century.

When they returned to the Campo Santo, they were agreeably surprised to find themselves the only visitors within its walls. This very much increased the pleasure with which they sauntered along the cloisters. They would not look at the frescoes at first, they said, they would gradually prepare themselves for that supreme pleasure. So they studied the arcades, with their pretty windows and tombstone pavements, and lingered long over the grass plot in the centre, trying to

recall that great day in Pisa on which the 53 ship loads of holy earth from Mount Calvary had been there deposited by order of the good militant Bishop Ubaldo Lanfranchi, who had led the Pisan crusade to Palestine.

But the frescoes, when at last they began to study them, delighted them beyond everything. They hardly knew which of the great pictures interested them most, as they recognized "The Lives of the Hermits in the Desert," "The Story of Man from the Creation to the Flood," "The Life of the Patron Saint of Pisa, St. Ranieri," or "The Triumph of Death." In the latter extraordinary picture they were especially struck by the representation of the cavalcade of knights and ladies who are going hunting, being constrained to pull up their horses in horror on being brought unexpectedly face to face with three coffins lying uncovered by the road.

"Do you see, Ailie," said St. Frederick, "how Orcagna (if Orcagna really did it)

sought to enhance the effect of the startling spectacle on the gay hunting party, by representing the occupant of the first coffin as only newly dead, while that of the third is reduced to a skeleton? I fancy, however, that I am not making an original observation —the idea seems to come to me second-hand—"

"From Sarah Tytler's 'Notes on the Old Masters,' perhaps, which we read long ago together, not thinking we should *see* together these veritable things; *but* I think it was a very horrible idea of him to put the coffins in at all," said Ailie. "How strange that all these old painters should have had the same habit of introducing so many scenes in a single picture—a little piece about one thing, then a patch about another, and so on. It reminds one of Mosaic work on a loose, large scale, and certainly the 'fragments' are extremely curious, and they form a very effective whole."

"How proud of these frescoes the people

of Pisa must have been when they were first finished, Ailie. We can fancy them flocking here in crowds to admire them."

"Ah, yes. Never thinking though, that 600 years afterwards people would be running from all ends of the earth to wonder over them. The lives of those old masters were not wasted; they left their mark on the world. Why do you sigh, Fred?"

"From envy, I suppose, Ailie. The life before me looks so colourless after contemplating theirs. A mediocre clergyman is a sufficiently hum-drum sort of individual."

"But you must not be a 'mediocre' one, St. Fred. And don't you think that a clergyman who combined a Sicilian proprietorship with his benefice might find a little novel colouring to touch up his hum-drum life?"

"I know of one bit of colouring, Ailie—English, not Sicilian colouring—that I should like to brighten up my life with, but I see you are getting into one of your satirical moods; so it is well we are leaving this consecrated spot."

"But I am very sorry to go away from it, Fred. I wish we had been staying at Pisa instead of at Leghorn, so that we might have come here often."

"So do I, but it was necessary for me to see Signor Bosco, at Livorno (don't you prefer the Italian to the English form of the word?) about a difficulty with regard to this Sicilian property. It seems that a relative wants to dispute the will. If there is any unpleasantness of that sort, I shall wish Mr. White had not had his eccentric thought of leaving it to me."

"I did not know Mr. White had any relatives."

"Nor I, until the other day, but we won't talk about these matters now, Ailie. They will spoil your impression of the Campo Santo."

"I hope the impression has gone too deep for that, and we are out of the sacred precincts; so just tell me the state of affairs, Fred, if not beyond my comprehension."

"Oh, it is all very simple, but none the less unpleasant on that account. It seems Mr. White had a son, a wild lad, who gave him so much trouble, that when he was sixteen he turned him out of doors, vowing he would have nothing more to do with him as long as he lived, and that he need expect nothing after his death. The boy got on board some ship at Catania, and went away, nobody ever heard where. Some two months ago he turned up at Paris ill, and wrote a penitent letter to his father, begging him to forget old scores and send him some money, as the state of his health prevented him supporting himself. The father sent on his letter to his man of business, this Signor Bosco, with one from himself, to the effect that he had sworn to hold no communication with his son so long as he lived, and had no inclination to break his oath, but that Bosco might forward to the son's address the sum of one thousand francs, which he did. In about a month after this, the father had an intima-

tion of his son's death at Paris, and the implacable old man sent the news to Bosco with the remark, that it was lucky he had not been calculating on his son for his heir, as he would have been put out of his reckoning, and that he hoped poor Charley Monckton's son was good for fifty years. In less than a week from that date old Mr. White himself had a fit and died, and some days after, to my great surprise, I heard, as you know, through Signor Bosco, that I was his heir by will. Had my father been alive, of course the estate would have been left to him instead, for he was the only man in the world whom old Mr. White cared a straw about, and had more than once been able to do him good service. The letter to me was scarcely posted when Signor Bosco received a brief note from some woman at Paris, saying she had 'seen the death of her father-in-law, Mr. White, in the papers; was surprised that Signor Bosco had sent her no private intimation, and that she waited the Signor's communications respecting the

will and the property.' Bosco replied by return that it was his 'unhappy duty to inform madame that Mr. White had not been made aware of his son's marriage; that the son had unfortunately so offended his father many years ago that his father had disinherited him, and had willed away the property to the son of an old friend.' In reply to this, Signor Bosco had another note from madame yesterday morning, expressing 'her profound astonishment at the contents of his letter, as she had been under the impression that her late husband had informed his father of their marriage very shortly before his death; but she saw now that such could not have been the case, as, had the father known of it, he could not surely have been guilty of such cruel injustice as to have left an unoffending daughter-in-law totally unprovided for, by making so unnatural a disposition of his property.' A postscript added, 'that as her marriage can be proved without difficulty, she shall certainly dispute the will.'

Now Ailie, what think you of the state of affairs?"

"Just about as uncomfortable as possible, Fred, but I don't believe that obstinate old man would have altered his will if he had known of his daughter's existence."

"Nor I, but I fervently wish that his son had told him, although I believe the property rightfully mine."

"Yes, only Fred dear, it will so spoil your pleasure in having it, if you think that someone else is grudging it to you, especially a woman."

"I should get out of that feeling by allowing the lady as large an annuity from the estate as circumstances would permit, Ailie."

"Oh, that would be very nice, Fred. Yes, that's just what you must do. Have you told papa and Aunt Mona about this?"

"No, Ailie, because Aunt Mona would be always saying, 'oh, what a pity! What a sad pity!' And your papa would be continually jesting about my 'robbing the widow.'"

By the time this "state of affairs" had been related and discussed, the cousins found themselves again in that broad street, along the central length of which the Arno lazily flows. Bands of peasants were making their way to vespers in the different churches; as one after another would push back the barrier of heavy leather, padded and quilted, which hung before the church doors, an enticing *coup d'œil* of the interiors would be afforded to the passers-by.

"Fred," said Allie, "would you mind taking me in here?"

A quaint dreamy Gregorian chant was floating from out the church they were passing; as some one had moved the hanging mat at the door. Allie found it irresistible.

"It will do us both good to go in," was the reply, "after all our worldly talk," so they too swung open the barrier, and took their places among a crowd of Italian worshippers, all reverently kneeling on the bare marble floor. Could the church wardens and

the general congregation of a certain English parish church have beheld their future rector engaging in his devotions in that manner and place, on that Sunday afternoon, there would have been grave shakings of the head among them, and strongly expressed doubts as to his fitness for office in their midst. But although appearances might go against him, the Rev. Frederick Monckton was as little inclined towards Mariolatry at that moment as the lowest Churchman of his expectant flock. For in truth, the shrines of the Queen of Heaven in that little church were not of a character to inspire devotion in a mind of refinement, while the forms observed at the altar were more tedious than edifying to the uninitiated. Nevertheless the cousins found it good to be there. They noticed with interest how men, women and children came in just as they found convenient, and after dipping their fingers in the vessels of holy water by the doors, would sign themselves with the cross, kneel on the pavement, and join de-

voutly in the service. Ailie, whose ideas of Roman worship had been hitherto derived from very occasional attendance at London chapels where the singing had been conducted by a few chosen voices, which the body of the congregation had merely listened to, was glad to find that the Catholics at home joined as heartily in the singing as any Protestant congregation she had ever heard, some of them using books, others chanting from memory.

The officiating priests were noble looking elderly men. The acolytes bore themselves reverently, and as the incense curled upwards from the censers, there recurred to Ailie's mind the thought of the golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. The cousins left the church, if not refreshed at any rate soothed in spirit, and walked arm in arm once more along the paved banks of the Arno, now thronged with chattering pedestrians. The small marble-topped tables which had been twirled outside of the *cafés*, were surrounded by lively groups of friends,

who preferred sipping their coffee *al fresco* on the 17th December, to imbibing it in the noisy and crowded interiors.

"This is life, Ailie," said St. Frederick.

"Yes, and I would like to 'enjoy life,' Fred, by going in for some coffee. Would you think it shockingly 'fast' if I sat down by this little empty table?"

"Not at all" was the reply, so Ailie took possession of a chair, but had no sooner done so than she rose suddenly up again and hurried her cousin away.

He looked at her in some surprise for explanation.

"Seal-skins," whispered Ailie, "all five inside the *café*."

As nothing would induce her to turn back, *café noir* had to be postponed till they had regained the privacy of the little salon at Leghorn, where they were received by Mrs. Herbert with a smile of welcome, and by Mr. Henderson with an enquiry as to how "the late Christians had enjoyed their Sabbath-day's journey."

CHAPTER XII.

GOING OVER TO ROME.

THE sensible waiter of Leghorn, who spoke English like a Dutchman, helped to speed four parting guests from the ——Hotel on the 18th of December, by packing for their behoof an acceptable wallet of provisions. Thus independent of non-digestible "snatches" at wayside stations, our quartette held high pic-nic lunch in their carriage on cold tongue and an Italian turkey, rolls, wine, and mandarins. These very sweet little oranges were rendered all the sweeter to two at least of the party, by reason of a tuft of shiny green leaves having been left on their stalks when they were picked that morning.

Mr. Henderson, gout not being in the ascendant, was in one of his happiest moods. Mrs. Herbert, bereft of her knitting, as the

missing wire had not yet been replaced, was not so hilarious. Mr. Henderson twitted her with idleness, and bantered his nephew on going at last "openly" over to Rome. St. Frederick took refuge in a copy of Macaulay's "Lays," and attempted to give a reading from the same, but this his uncle would not for a moment tolerate, and furthermore promulgated a decree that none of his party should be heard to mention the names of any local celebrities, from Romulus and Remus to Victor Emmanuel inclusive, under heavy pains and penalties throughout the journey.

"Then I suppose, papa," said Ailie, "if there is to be neither talking nor reading allowed, I may look out at the window and learn my geography for the rest of the day."

"Don't begin yet," pleaded her cousin, "we are just going to stop at another station. Take a trot with me along the platform to refresh your mental energies."

"And to ventilate our ideas, in happy immunity from pains and penalties," Ailie

added, nodding defiantly at her father, as her cousin helped her down the steps.

"Not at all miss," rejoined the old gentleman, "I allow you out only on your parole."

"What excellent spirits he is in," remarked St. Fred as soon as they were beyond earshot.

"And you yourself are not exactly miserable, Fred; you don't look as if that poor woman at Paris were weighing down your mind. By-the-by, did you see her letters; were they written in the hand of a lady?"

"They were well expressed, but the writing was poor and scrawly; I fancy she is an illiterate woman, but a clever one."

"What does Signor Bosco think of her claim, Fred?"

"He says she has none, but at the same time expects she will be troublesome. It is by his advice, you know, that I am pushing on to Rome to-day; he thinks the sooner I am at Catania the better."

"Of course, possession is nine points of the

law," said Ailie sapiently, "if she is only a common woman, Fred, she will be all the more likely to be content with an annuity, and give up hope of the estate."

"I don't know that, but I feel sure if she disputes it, it will go against her; still the thought of the worry and bother of going to law would be to me almost unbearable, *Partenza!* already! what a hurry they are in!"

When the train was again in motion, St. Frederick assiduously superintended his cousin's geographical studies, but once Mr. Henderson's afternoon nap had set in, it seemed to Mrs. Herbert that the young people indulged in unconscionable digressions.

When "the shades of eve" descended, as they will do when people are travelling no less than when they are at home, Ailie said "that as Nature had shut up her book, her children were free to play, and she thought their first little game ought to be to tease their Aunt Mona a bit, for she had been moping all day to her heart's delight." But

Aunt Mona protested, on the score that the slumbers of John Henderson, Esq., should be respected.

"By all means," said St. Frederick, fervently, "so let us all sit still and think, Ailie (thoughts are not fineable yet, I believe), about this wonderful memory-stirring, extraordinary Rome that we are getting nearer to every minute."

"I cannot realize that I shall be in Rome to-night," said Ailie. Nevertheless some few hours afterwards, she alighted in all good faith, and with much alacrity, when a powerful Italian voice was heard ringing along a platform the two musical syllables "Ro-ma!"

Her next gratification on being led past an interminable looking row of omnibuses, was to find that the destination of the one to be patronized by the quartette was the Hotel di Roma.

"What a comfort it is," exclaimed St. Fred, gratefully, "to have no traps to hunt up in the van. The Gladstones and these 'sweet

little *portemanteaux*,' you see, are always allowed in the railway carriage with us."

He was arranging the said baggages in the omnibus as he spoke, and expected the vehicle to start forthwith, but, on turning to take his seat, saw that the hotel commissionaire was ushering in another passenger, a lady in whom he at once recognized the pretty little widow to whom he had resigned his corner and his rug on the day they had crossed the Channel. The recognition was mutual, and the greeting which followed it quite as cordial as Ailie thought there was any occasion for; she confined hers to a gracious bow, and the widow on her part seemed to consider that a smile and very slight inclination of the head was all that was due from her to either Ailie or her aunt, and having so dismissed them as it were, proceeded to open an animated conversation with St. Frederick. Mr. Henderson, who had never set eyes on the lady before, from the simple fact of his eyes having been closed from the time she had entered

the train at Amiens till she had quitted it at Paris on the 11th December, was mystified, and being moreover tired and hungry, was not disposed to act the part of patient listener, but, with a good hearty British growl, enquired of his responsible nephew "if it was by his arrangement that they were to stop in the omnibus all night?"

St. Frederick replied (more curtly, Ailie thought, than she had ever known him do before) that they were in "the hands of the commissionaire."

"Then the sooner we get out of them by taking some other conveyance the better," said the irritated uncle, essaying to move.

But the interesting little widow stayed the motion by gracefully leaning towards him, and saying in the most dulcet tone of entreaty—

"Oh, pray don't go away! I shall feel such remorse if you do! For the detention, I grieve to say, is entirely on my account. The commissionaire is waiting for my uncle, who has

gone to find my box. I must apologise so very much!"

"My dear lady!" cried St. Frederick, anxious to make up for his uncle's *brusquerie*, "you have nothing to apologise for! How in the world can you help it?"

"Oh, you are so good to say so! Well we must make the box apologise when it appears, and thank goodness here it is, and my uncle too."

"If that widow's sun is set, it will soon rise again, auntie," whispered Ailie. Mrs. Herbert only sighed. Mr. Henderson, who had collapsed under high pressure, as it were, into his corner again, turned his face moodily towards the omnibus door, feeling inclined to accord but a savage welcome to the box-hunting uncle, but as the sun dispels a gathering fog, so did a genial smile displace the gloom on Mr. Henderson's countenance, when he found that instead of the expected stranger, it was their worthy fellow traveller, the Rev. T. Droning, for whom his long-

suffering had been exercised. The two shook hands with much cordiality. It was now the little widow's turn to be surprised, more especially when she noted the *empressement* with which her uncle addressed himself to the tall lady in the fur cloak.

"My dear," he said, turning round to his niece again, "I have had the pleasure of meeting these ladies and gentlemen on my journey a few days ago."

"And so had I, uncle, yes, and this gentleman (indicating St. Frederick with a coquetish wave of her tiny hand) acted the good Samaritan to me. You see I was alone, without my dear uncle to take care of me! It was just after I had crossed the Channel on my goose-chase after you."

"What a coincidence!" said Mr. Droning, "I am sure (to St. Frederick) I am greatly obliged to you for taking care of my niece."

"Your niece, sir," replied St. Fred, "kindly magnifies the very slight attention I had the opportunity of showing her."

"Mr. Droning," said Ailie (who approved as much of him as she disapproved of his niece), "how round the world is! Is it not quite proved by the way in which people are always meeting each other!"

Mr. Droning's reply was drowned in a crash—bang—thundering noise overhead.

"Oh, my poor dear box!" exclaimed the little widow.

"It is 'oh, our poor dear' heads, I think," cried Mr. Henderson, "I expected the roof of the omnibus was going to be staved in upon them."

In his heart he wished that little widow and her box at Jericho.

The rattling of the omnibus over the stones of Rome precluded farther conversation, but Ailie repeated softly to herself, in the same spirit as Leigh Hunt had once reiterated the word—"Med-i-ter-ra-nean!"

Ro-ma! Ro-ma!

CHAPTER XIII.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

THAT night the Rev. T. Droning, in dressing gown and slippers, sat reading in his room when he heard some one 'tapping, gently tapping, at his chamber door.'

No croaking raven, but one of the sweetest looking of women kind was the visitor.

"Oh, uncle!" she exclaimed, "how cheerless you look—only one candle! and no fire? Why ever don't you have a fire?"

"It is not worth while, Cecilia. I am just going to bed."

"Oh, no indeed you are not! You are just coming into my room to have a cosy, cosy little chat! Let me show you how comfortable I look!"

His Reverence relinquished his book with a sigh, and suffered himself to be dragged

across the corridor into a large room, bright with waxlights and a glowing hearth fire, by the side of which he was pushed into a luxurious easy chair.

"Now, uncle," said the little widow, pulling up a low seat for herself beside him, "what shall we talk about? My affairs? Oh, no, please don't—not just now; I have put the sorrowful subject away to bed there. Yes, there it lies," giving a little shiver, "and I shall take it up again when you leave me. Meantime, let me try and be cheerful as in the old time. Let me think, I have never been away from you. Oh, how I wish I had not!"

As she spoke, she tossed off her tiny white crape cap, and loosening a comb, let down over her shoulders a flood of golden hair.

"Your troubles have not changed you, Cecilia, you look just as much of a girl as you did before," said the uncle kindly, patting the golden head.

Cecilia in truth, in her violet dressing gown and flowing locks, looked something like

eighteen. In point of fact she was but twenty-two.

"Well, uncle," she replied, "it would not do to be quite so washed out looking just yet as that old widow we travelled with. By-the-by, who are those people? Don't know who I mean? Yes, yes, uncle you do—those people in the omnibus."

"Oh, very nice people, indeed, my dear. Excellent people, I should say."

"Ah, excellent people generally *are* disagreeable, I think—dreadful old savage, the old man with the grizzly beard."

"You surprise me, Cecilia. You must be confounding them with some other people. I found Mr. Henderson most courteous, and he is certainly a singularly handsome man."

"Oh, he has a good enough face, but I assure you he growled like a bear because you were so long in finding my box."

"Ah, by-the-by, I was going to ask you, my dear, if you could do away with that box, if we go on to Sicily."

"Do away with my box?"

"Well, I mean leave it somewhere. It is so very big; I quite pity the men who have to lift it."

"Oh, my dear old uncle, you are too good for this world. The men are used to big boxes. They don't mind; it is a mere matter of balancing."

"Those two ladies who were in the omnibus, Cecilia, have nothing with them but what you saw."

"I thought they looked of the strong-minded order, who can go to the ends of the earth with only a knapsack over their shoulder. But heavy mourning makes such a difference, uncle. Creasing is fatal to crape! But you have not yet told me who they are."

"My dear, all I know is this—Mr. Henderson lives at Kensington, and his daughter and the other lady live with him."

"Ah, well. Who is the other lady? Governess or companion, I suppose? She has the air of being sat upon."

"I am sure," said Mr. Droning, "that Mr. Henderson's sister-in-law is a most lady-like person."

"Oh, yes, of course. I did not mean that she was not like a lady. As to that, put her in a gallery, and she would pass for an old draped statue. You must be too near the fire, uncle; your face is quite flushed. Allow me to wheel you back. There, so! Well, then, this lady is the girl's aunt? Not a bad-looking girl; violet eyes, black hair, and remarkably pretty teeth. But she is a stuck-up little thing; I don't take to her. The young man seems the most rational of the party; he is in the Church, I suppose? He is very fine-looking. What relation is he to the others? Nephew to the old gentleman? Oh, then, he is the girl's cousin. Yes, I see. Well, now, why are they all out together?"

"Really, Cecilia, I don't know, unless for a little change; that is why most people travel. Very likely the young man, as a clergyman, wishes to visit the foreign cathe-

drals, and the others having time, and apparently money at command, are accompanying him."

"Very amiable of the youth, I am sure, to lead about such an old bear."

"You surprise me again, Cecilia! I found Mr. Henderson a most genial man, though eccentric in his humour, perhaps. I am looking forward to seeing more of him when I get home again."

"When *we* get home again, uncle dear."

Mr. Droning received the correction with the slightest possible sigh.

"Yes, you will return with me, dear?"

"Well, perhaps things will so come round that I shall be asking you to give up your work, and come and live with *me*, you know! Wouldn't that be a wonderful change! But we must be together for the rest of our lives, wherever it is. I won't run away and leave my poor old uncle again, like a naughty, naughty girl. No, no, poor Cecy knows better than that now!"

While she uttered the penitent words, poor Cecy stroked her uncle's arm with affectionate reverence. Then starting up, she said—

"Do you know I think I could go to sleep; but you look quite wide awake, and oh, so comfortable, toasting those dear old feet in the slippers that his little Cecy made for him!"

"Want to go to bed, dear; then I shall say good-night."

"Good-night, you dear, best old uncle. Oh, by-the-by, have you any Italian money about you? I am reduced to a few, a very few Napoleons, and they are down in the depths of that box; I should have to unpack it entirely to get to them."

With rather more than a suspicion of a sigh, Mr. Droning took out his purse.

"I can give you but a very few lire, Cecilia," he said, quietly.

"Oh, thanks; these will be quite sufficient," she replied, receiving a small packet of notes from his hand. "As you are so awfully good as to say you will pay my bills with your own,

I shall be able to manage now. Who knows but I may be able to pay them all back to you some day?"

Mr. Droning made no reply, but kissed his niece, and left her.

Cecilia bolted the door behind him, saying, musingly, as she did so—

"He has not the least idea who they are. *Tant mieux!*"

Then floating back to the fire in her graceful violet robe, she stirred the slumbering logs on the hearth, smiled in the mirror above, and whispered cheeringly to herself—

"Not changed? Yes, I *am* changed—for the better. *Tant mieux!*"

Then taking a French novel from a hand bag, and a glass of Marsala from her flask, she established herself in the luxurious chair which her uncle had just quitted.

On the other side of the wall, in a facsimile chair, by just such another fire, sat another girl, not bad-looking, with violet eyes, black hair, and remarkably pretty teeth.

She was leaning back in her chair, wrapped in a soft rose-coloured robe, and her delicate tapering fingers met each other in a clasp at the back of her classic little head. The violet eyes were making an idle survey of the room, and reporting their opinions to their mistress. "Dear little loves and graces flying over the ceiling, and the shading round the cornice beautifully toned. Those heavy crimson hangings by the window are very rich and luxurious. As to those two white net-curtained beds, they are for all the world like two big bird cages. Dear Aunt Mona! How peacefully she is sleeping." Then the corners of Ailie's mouth relaxed, as if some whimsical thought had occurred to her, and her mind ran on again: "What a dear old couple they would make, to be sure. I wish they were young enough to really fall in love. I suppose people don't when they get old. It's only 'esteem' that they feel then! I wonder why! How people always laugh when old bachelors and spinsters get married. I think it's too

bad. If old married folks are supposed to love each other, why not old unmarried folks? My life's sun is set, and will ne'er rise again. Poor, dear Aunt Mona, she is always thinking about him. Ah, there be widows and widows. What a conceited, selfish, feather-headed little thing that niece of Mr. Droning's is, and yet how very good he is to her. How prettily they have tiled this fireplace. Well, where would they do things well, if not at Rome? Rome. O, dear me! This is my first night at Rome. And yet I am not so happy as I ought to be! That little *contretemps* in the omnibus was so uncomfortable. I wish Fred had not been quite so much taken up with that silly little widow. I don't think papa liked it. And oh, Fred, Fred, you arranged so as to seat yourself beside her instead of next to me, as usual, at dinner, or supper, which ever it was we had; I am sure I don't know which. I only know I could not eat much. Jealous? No," cried Ailie, almost aloud, and unclasping her hands. "No, it is

not jealousy. I would not mind in the least, if she were nice; but she is not nice, and I do mind. Oh, yes, I mind very much. I must not go to bed thinking of this; I will get my little evening book, and read a bit to compose my mind."

In the next room to Ailie's, on the left, a young man was also trying to compose his mind by means of a book, but signally failed.

"Ailie, Ailie," he cried mentally, "what a cold 'good-night' you gave me. I can see she does not like her, and yet, poor little thing, I don't think she can be older than Ailie herself. What a different life the two girls have had. Ailie's so happily uneventful. Not even the memory of her mother's death to cloud it, for she was only three years old when she lost her, and that other poor child was made an orphan at ten, I think Mr. Droning said, through a railway accident—both parents killed at once—then was brought up at school—came to him when she left it, and married at twenty 'most imprudently,'

those were his words. Dear little thing! Very impulsive I should think. One who would love a fellow passionately through thick and thin. Wonder if he loved her? I'm glad that old uncle is good to her. Can't understand Ailie not taking to her. There's something so very winning and interesting about her. Just the sort of girl, for she is only a girl, whom I should have thought Ailie would have liked; that's the worst of Ailie, she takes up such unfounded prejudices. Wish uncle had not been so rude in the omnibus; quite unlike him. He is often very odd in his way, but I never before knew him forget that he was a gentleman! and how sweetly she took it. It was too bad of him, upon my word, to be down on me like that, because he was unavoidably kept waiting a minute or two, considering, too, that he never has any trouble about any arrangements at all! Ailie showed no impatience though. I am glad of that. I should not have liked her to have seen Ailie to disadvantage. Dear

Ailie, she is very nice, and very good. Such a restful feeling comes to me when I have Ailie by my side! And if I take her hand, a sense of peaceful joy steals over me. But she did not say good-night with her heart. I shall be glad when it is morning. I shall make her say good morning very heartily indeed. 'Be my last thoughts,' &c. Why is it that these lines occur to me just now? Oh, it is hard for us priests to keep up to the mark, and if we do not, we seem such hypocrites. Ailie, Ailie, you are better than I am. When I have you, it will be easier for me to walk 'worthy of my calling.'"

In the corresponding room to St. Frederick's, on the opposite side of the corridor, the last thoughts of a certain elderly gentleman were being grunted out half audibly—

"Confound this old gout, or rather confound that bothering woman and her box that brought it on! Cold in the toe—nothing else, felt it seize hold of it in the omnibus. Confound it all! And that young fool of a

fellow smiling in her face as if we were all very much obliged to her. Set of muffs these curates are. Don't know what his father wanted to make him one for! Only good they are is to dangle about the women! And what a precious fool you were John Henderson to turn out of your snug box at home, and be kicked about like this. What did I do it for? Oh, to please that child to be sure. Well, I hope she is pleased, didn't look much like it to-night though. Ah, she doesn't like that niece of Mr. Droning's, I can see! Well, I don't like her either. Too much of the pussy-cat purr about her for me. She can scratch, too, if I'm not mistaken! Old Droning's fond of her though. Not half a bad fellow himself. Oh—o—o! this gout. It would make a saint swear! Bother that boy! He shall go to Sicily by himself! See Rome and die! So I shall, I believe! Blest if I take another step with him! Ailie and Mona can potter about here, now we are here, and see the antiquities. Then home sweet home for

me. Frederick can come with us if he be ready, if not let him stay in Sicily altogether, if he likes! Don't think his parish would lose much. He would fall in love and out of it with every woman in the congregation before the first month was out. Not but what there are worse lads than Fred in the Church. Now that my mind's made up, I feel better. I'll try and put this blessed leg to sleep."

CHAPTER XIV.

THEY GO FAR ABOUT WHO NEVER MEET.

"GOOD MORNING!"

St. Frederick, who was making his way to the coffee-room, turned joyfully at the words, for they were uttered in a clear, frank, kindly voice that was pleasantly familiar to him. When he turned, a hand that was comfortable to hold was laid within his own —his other hand closed over it affectionately.

"Dear Ailie," he said, "you are looking bright as the morning! I am so glad."

By way of giving further expression to his gladness, he bent to kiss the still imprisoned hand.

A deeper glow than that of the morning brightness tinged Ailie's cheeks. "Here is papa," she said, quickly withdrawing her hand. Her papa kissed her, and in Ailie's

inmostself she was, perhaps, pleased to think that the salute of her cousin had been given to her hand and not her cheek, where it must have inevitably been obliterated by her papa's very hearty osculation. Mr. Henderson nodded to his nephew and hoped he had ordered a good English breakfast suitable for English stomachs.

"Papa," said Ailie, as they took their seats at the long table. "What had we better see to-day? Fred says he can't afford us more than two or three days at Rome, so we must not waste them."

"*Fred* says? *He* can't afford us? Do you think we are travelling on your cousin's charity?"

St. Frederick's face waxed hot.

"Oh, Papa!" cried Ailie hastily, and wondering what on earth had come between her cousin and her papa's good graces. "Papa, of course I did not mean in that way, I meant 'afford' only in regard to time."

"My time is my own," said the old gentleman testily, "and I stay here just as many days as I choose."

"Of course, my dear uncle. I do not wish you to leave Rome a day sooner than you feel disposed—only I did not know you would care to stay; I have a reason for wishing to reach Sicily as soon as we conveniently can, or I should have arranged our journey in shorter stages. I fear now that I have not been sufficiently considerate of your comfort."

"My boy, I am not going to be a stumbling-block in your way. You may start as soon as you like, for nobody in Sicily will see John Henderson there!"

"Uncle!" "Papa!" cried the two young people, sorely troubled.

"I think you may be very content, Ailie. It is not every girl who is taken as far as Rome. You and Aunt Mona can do the antiquity business very well together for a few days, then home, sweet home! This kicking about does not suit me."

St. Frederick could find no words to express his feelings, and tears stood in Ailie's eyes, but she brushed them bravely away on the entrance of Mr. Droning. Like oil on troubled waters was the presence of Mr. Droning in their midst; for there was about this man a subtle, indefinable sympathy which put him *en rapport* with whomsoever he might be brought into contact, whether young or old, male or female, saint or sinner. To this great gift of "sympathy" it was, that he owed the love of every man, woman, and child in his parish. His appearance was especially welcome to Mr. Henderson also at that moment; the situation brought about by the announcement of his change of plan threatened to be more sensational than comfortable—for, if there was one thing in the world that could make him more thoroughly uncomfortable than even gout itself, it was the sight of a tear in the eye of his daughter Allison.

Turning his back then as much as he might

on both daughter and nephew, he enquired, with interested politeness, whether it might be the intention of Mr. Droning to make a long stay in the Italian capital. Mr. Droning replied, with an audible sigh, that he would fain stay at Rome for the Christmas, but that his niece was so bent on going to Sicily that he supposed he should have to take her in a day or two."

"Ah, my girl wants to go on to Sicily too, but I have been telling her that that does not suit my book," said Mr. Henderson with a very superior-generalship sort of air, implying that he was not the man to be trotted about to humour the whim of a youthful female relation."

"Is it not too bad of papa, Mr. Droning," asked Ailie, with a vague feeling that an appeal in that quarter might possibly be of service. "We all started for the purpose of going to Sicily, and now papa suddenly announces his intention of not going a step further than Rome. I know it is only be-

cause you had that dreadful gout last night, papa."

A young, intellectual-looking man, who was seated opposite to Mr. Henderson, leaned forward to attract his attention. "I have just overheard your daughter's remark," he said, smiling. "If you will permit me to suggest one cure, *par excellence*, for the gout, I should say it would be to spend the next few months in Sicily. My sister (indicating a little old maid at his side) and myself have but just returned, and you can have no idea how delightful we found it. The climate is something wonderful—the trees in full foliage—the flowers all in bloom—and the sun so hot that you are bound to carry an umbrella. You would forget about the gout if you were to sit sunning yourself in the hotel gardens of Sicily!"

"Oh, papa, how delicious it all sounds!"

"That puts rather a new face on the thing," said Mr. Henderson, musingly.

"We shall get him to go," Ailie whispered

confidentially to St. Frederick, and she bestowed a grateful look on the young *vis-à-vis* who had volunteered the information. He and St. Frederick entered into further conversation *à propos* of Sicily. Ailie listened with interest until her attention was diverted by three new comers taking up their position in line with the little old maiden sister. "Father, mother, and daughter," said Ailie to herself. The father was a young-old man, with a happy, puffy face; the mother, gorgeous in velvet and chinchilla, wore a tower bonnet with flags of ribbons waving from its top-most turret, and marabout feathers fluttering over the bulwarks, the face beneath the heavy fortification looked at peace with itself and all the world. The daughter's face was another edition of the mother's, but a finer one, and set in very much smaller type; the daughter's dress was simplicity itself.

"Now then, *garçon*, *garçon*, look alive," cried the father, rattling the handle of his

knife against his glass to attract the attention of a graceful lounger with a *serviette* under his arm. "Well, now what have ye got, eh? Ask him Gracie."

The daughter made the enquiry in very pure French, the Italian understood, and told off the stock in hand on his finger ends.

"*Filley de buff*, or *pully*," repeated the father, turning towards his wife, "pay your money and take your choice, mother."

"Oh, James, what a one you are to come out with," cried the lady laughing, "have which you like, there!"

"Tell him we'll have 'em both, Gracie, nothin' like layin' a good foundation."

At ease respecting the important question of breakfast, the father turned his eyes down the length of the table to take a general survey of the company. They were arrested in their course by the portly figure of Mr. Henderson; they dilated thereupon with gratified astonishment.

"Mother, did ye ever see that old gent before?"

"Law, James, if it ain't our old neighbour, No. 7! Well, they go far about who never meet, as my old grandmother used to say. Speak to him James, it would seem friendly-like."

James was nothing loth; clearing his throat by a loud double hem! hem! he succeeded in attracting Mr. Henderson's attention, and with a beaming smile, said pleasantly—

"Daresay you don't happen to know us, sir, but we know you, sir, very well indeed. Yes, sir, we've seen you walkin' up an' down your back garden, sir, this ten year an' more. You live at No. 7, sir, and we live at No. 10, garden with the statue of Venus, sir, that's our garden, and this here's my card, sir."

Mr. Henderson smilingly received an elaborated pasteboard, on which shone in letters of gold the honest name of James Stokes, dealer in old china, &c., &c.

"That's my name, sir, and that's my trade, and I ain't ashamed of either of 'em."

"Well, Mr. Stokes," said Mr. Henderson, "it isn't everybody who has lived in this

world so long as you and I have who can say so much."

"Ain't he a nice old gentleman, and that's his daughter down there, that gal with the pretty eyes," whispered Mrs. Stokes to her own daughter approvingly, but the daughter, with a look of distress, said—

"Oh, mother dear, hush! they will hear you."

"My wife, sir, my daughter, sir," said Mr. Stokes, with an explanatory wave of his hand in the direction of the ladies he had named.

Mr. Henderson bowed low to the marabout feathers and to the little plain felt hat consecutively.

"That's my only chicken, sir," explained Mr. Stokes, jerking his thumb back to indicate his daughter, "the only one, sir, but she's a rare one, is Gracie. As soon as she was out of the shell, so to speak, she took to books and pictures, and things. My word, but she's been a dear chick to us. We've spent a

fortun' over her eddication, but lord, sir, what's fortins made for but to spend 'em?"

Mr. Henderson regarded the learned chicken with some curiosity. She was pecking away at some bread crumbs, and did not look up.

Ailie, who was more nearly opposite to her, could see that the girl was painfully embarrassed at being made the subject of remark, and considerately struck up a conversation with her, but the father, the meanwhile, continued rattling off a list of her accomplishments to Mr. Henderson, and in so loud a tone that talk as the girls liked, they could not avoid overhearing.

"As for paintin', sir, she's doin' some of them Vatican pictures, and I'm darned if I could tell which was her's and which was Raffle's. It's all along of her, you see, that we're here. Nothin' would do but she must see them pictures, and then nothin' would do but she must copy them. She's a rare one at

takin' likenesses too, is Gracie. Take your likeness as soon as look at you, she will."

"I fear she does not intend taking my likeness, Mr. Stokes, for she will not even look at me."

"Oh, she's a wonder for modesty, is Gracie, sir, if you'll believe me, she never had a croquet party, but she'd run out and dress up the old statoo of Venus in the garden before the company arrived."

"And I do call it a shame," edged in Mrs. Stokes, "to dress it in a sheet, makin' that poor Venus look for all the world like a Jane Shore a-doin' penance. Whereas she might just as well put her on one of her own pretty evenin' dresses, and make her comfortable-like."

"Dear mother, do be quiet," pleaded Gracie, but neither she nor Ailie could help laughing. It was just then a dark cloud of silk and crape came floating into the room, and a silvery voice, which was the voice of Mr. Droning's widowed niece, spoke from out of it—

"I have ordered a carriage to be round in three minutes, uncle." She gave her uncle a hand as she spoke, the other she tendered to St. Frederick; towards Ailie and Mr. Henderson, she inclined her graceful head. Ailie neglecting the graces, made the most frigid of bows in return; and would have continued talking to little Miss Stokes, but found that young person completely absorbed in contemplation of the niece of Mr. Droning, whilst Mrs. Stokes had suspended a knifeful of the "pulley" midway to its destination, and sat open-mouthed, gazing also at the elegant apparition in the weeds.

"They are as much struck by her beauty as St. Fred is," thought Ailie, rising from the table. She just missed, in doing so, Mrs. Stokes' exclamations of surprise to her daughter.

"Laws, Gracie, if she ain't Madam the Marquise I ain't your mother!"

"I do believe she is, mother," replied the daughter. Whereupon Mrs. Stokes, good motherly being, out of pure human kindliness, nodded her feathers energetically, and

would have spoken to the supposed Marquise, but for the blank unconsciousness of the advance maintained by Mr. Droning's niece, as she turned her back on the whole Stokes' family.

"Have you breakfasted, my dear?" asked Mr. Droning.

"Hours ago, uncle, upstairs."

Mr. Droning rose from table. At the same time Mrs. Herbert entered the room. She, also, had breakfasted, and was in out-door toilette.

"I am going out with my niece in a carriage. May we offer you a seat?" said Mr. Droning to her.

The offer was made but timidly, for he felt that his niece was not in sympathy with it, but he looked anxious about the answer.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Herbert, "you are very good, but I do not know yet what our arrangements (glancing at the other members of the quartette) may be for to-day."

"No arrangements are made, auntie," said

Ailie, "and so, for that very reason, just you go; you see you are quite ready to go out, and we have not thought about it."

"I thought you would be in such a hurry to see Rome, Ailie, that I dressed at once."

"You will come?" said Mr. Droning, eagerly.

Mrs. Herbert made no further objection.

"There will still be a spare seat," said Mr. Droning's niece. "Won't one of you have it?"

She was addressing Ailie and St. Frederick. Mr. Henderson's attention was being still monopolised by Mr. James Stokes.

"I must decline it, thank you," said Ailie.

"Then we must put up with you," said the widow, archly, to St. Frederick.

Just for a second St. Frederick wavered in his allegiance to Ailie, but only for a second. And then he, too, excused himself.

"Oh, that is too bad; you are quite out of my good graces!" she exclaimed. Nevertheless, she suffered him to lead her out to the carriage amicably enough.

Mr. Droning and Mrs. Herbert took the lead. Mr. Droning held Mrs. Herbert's muff while she seated herself in the carriage. A bright point of steel protruding from the lining caught his eye.

"My dear madam," he said, "how very dangerous," at the same time pulling out the long wire and presenting it to her.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Droning! What a treasure-trove!" cried Mrs. Herbert, receiving her lost wire with as much enthusiasm as if he had been presenting her with the Kohinoor diamond. A light as of "other days" overspread her countenance at the unexpected pleasure.

"Not quite so washed-out looking as I fancied she was," remarked Mr. Droning's niece in confidence to herself. While Mr. Droning remarked (also to himself)—

"She is a very sweet woman. Must have been lovely in her youth."

And then he sighed—he had so many reasons to sigh—as he arranged the rugs over her knees.

"Quite the old beau, isn't he?" remarked his niece, in an undertone to St. Frederick, over the carriage door.

"I shall have to sit here doing old gooseberry all the time. Can't say that I enjoy the *rôle*."

And then she made the most pitiful "moue" and asked if he would not out of compassion come and help her.

"You can't? A talk with your uncle? Ah, family affairs, I suppose, to arrange? Ah, what a good boy! Go away, then!"

"Are you really fond of statuary?" Miss Stokes asked of Ailie, when the others had left the coffee-room.

"Yes, very, really."

"Then I should like to show you a marble mother and child in this hotel."

"I have not been struck by the specimens of sculpture on the staircase landings."

"Oh, are they not hideous objects? I feel as if I wanted to smash them every time I go past. My room is up at the top, so that I have the full benefit of them all. I am glad

to see some one has knocked the head off one of them."

"Well, where is the beautiful one?"

"Oh, you can't find it unless you mistake your way, as I did; it's at the foot of some other staircase, close by the office where we have our keys. Come now and see it."

As they walked along the flagged corridor, Miss Stokes said to Ailie—

"That lady in the widow's dress—the very young widow I mean—is not of your party, is she?"

"No, we merely met in with her on the journey. Why do you ask? Do you know her?"

"Yes, quite well; but she does not seem to wish to know us. Now, here we are. What do you think of my statue? I think it is the most exquisite thing I ever saw in my life. The beauty and the grace of it to me are more than all the famous statues of antiquity that I have seen; but then, of course, I know nothing about them."

"I do not wonder you are in such raptures with it," said Ailie. "It really is beauty itself. Aunt Mona must see this."

For the next ten minutes the girls sang a duet of praise to the statue.

On their return to the flagged walk they saw that Mr. Henderson and his nephew were seated there in two cane easy chairs. They were talking so earnestly that the girls passed into the *salon de musique* to avoid interrupting them.

"I cannot tell you, uncle, how vexed I shall be if you give up Sicily," St. Frederick was saying. "Setting aside the great pleasure it is to have you all with me for company, I have also been relying on the moral support of your presence at Catania, for I may have some difficulty down there before getting into the property. It will be intensely disagreeable to me if it is so; and I shall want the 'countenance' of a friend."

Then St. Frederick told his uncle the state of affairs.

Mr. Henderson was extremely interested, as he always was over any question that touched on law.

"Oh, Fred, boy!" he said, "why didn't your father make a lawyer of you? He was a capital one himself. If I thought I could do you a service by going, why then I would go after all."

"Hurrah!" cried St. Fred, jumping up and shaking hands with his uncle. "Now we are 'as we were.' I shall go and tell Ailie."

He knew where she was to be found.

"Ailie, dear," he said joyously, entering the red velvet salon, and taking her hand, utterly regardless of the presence of Miss Stokes, "your papa has come to a better mind, and we all go to Sicily, as before agreed."

Then Ailie also felt it necessary to relieve her feelings by shaking hands.

"You must play a pæon of victory, St. Fred," she cried, leading him to the piano, with a merry sparkle in her eyes.

Very willingly he obeyed. He struck out the chords in faith; but oh! Excruciation of discord! How he suffered for his rashness! while the two girls, who had been well aware that the grand piano had seen better days, sat laughing, with carefully-guarded ears.

"Ailie," said her cousin, when he had sufficiently recovered, "if you ever deserved to be fined in your life, this is that moment. How dared you play such a trick upon the cloth?"

"My mother is calling, I must go," said Miss Gracie Stokes, tripping blithely away.

"Oh, Fred, she is such a nice little girl! I have elected her a friend."

"What?" cried St. Fred, following the direction of Ailie's eyes, as they watched the retreating figure. "Is she not the daughter of that vulgar old china-dealing man?"

Then Ailie's face grew serious.

"St. Fred," she said solemnly, "you know that I am no Radical, but also you know that

if I do not entirely sympathise with the *egalité* principle, I do so to a certain extent. Therefore it jars on me to hear you say in so slighting a tone, 'the daughter of that vulgar old china-dealing man.'"

St. Frederick laughed.

"What a memory you have, Ailie, to convict me of pride by my own words to you in the Tuileries Gardens *àpropos* of blue blouses! But, leaving *egalité* out of the question, what a girl you are for taking likes and dislikes to people at first sight. Why, you never saw this Miss Stokes till about half an hour ago."

"No; although we lived since childhood within a few doors of each other. Just to think that we should have both come to Rome to be introduced to each other? But is it very wrong to take likes and dislikes at first sight? Is it worse than falling in love at first sight? I have heard of people doing that."

CHAPTER XV.

A "WRINKLE" ÀPROPOS OF PRESENTATION TO THE POPE.

A GOODLY dinner was in progress at the *table d'hôte* of the Hotel di Roma, and a goodly company were assisting at it. Nine of the guests we have no difficulty in recognising, despite a few changes of toilette that have taken place among them since they met at breakfast.

Mrs. Stokes, for example, was beaming with the same motherly benignity from under a rose-bush cap, as in the morning she had beamed from beneath a towering fortress which she called a bonnet.

"And how did you enjoy yourself at St. Peter's, miss, and what else did you see?" she enquired of Ailie, nodding encouragingly at her across the table.

"I thoroughly enjoyed everything we saw, Mrs. Stokes, and we went in the afternoon to the Forum and the Capitol," replied Ailie, who was looking her very best in her pretty cashmere dress, with her hair tied low on her neck, in the prevailing fashion, with a knot of ribbon.

"Ah, to be sure," said Mrs. Stokes, "the Capital and the Forum. Wasn't it at the Capital that the geese set up the cackling, and frightened the ennemy? They was the wisest geese that ever I heard tell of. And then the Forum, that was the place, wasn't it, Gracie, where Julius Cæsar fell down dead (bein' stabbed) a-callin' of his friend a brute, and no wonder, when he saw the dagger in his hand."

"Oh, mother, never mind about all that," whispered Gracie, with hot cheeks.

"But, my dear," remonstrated her mother, "them old tales is so very interestin', and the folks in those times was so curous-like. Don't you remember, miss, about the Markis of

Curtis, how he jumped in that there hole in the Forum, thinkin' to fill it up with himself and his horse. Aye, we can laugh over it (noticing a smile on Ailie's face), but it were no laughin' matter to him!"

"Been presented to the Pope yet, Mr. Stokes?" asked Mr. Henderson.

"All in good time, sir, all in good time. Poor old gentleman hain't been well, you know. Must give him time. Yes, yes, there's a good time comin', sir, and a friend of mine (a gentleman as was presented himself) gave me the wrinkle. 'All you've got to do, Stokes,' says he, 'is to go to one of them old Cardinal fellows. You give him your card, and say you'd like to be interduced to his 'Oliness, if agreeable. Then you take your leave. Next day jolly old Cardinal calls for you at your hotel, with a horder to see his 'Oliness in his hand, just as you're agoing in to dinner. Take pot luck, sir,' says you, 'and you won't find him the boy to refuse. Next day you rig yourself out in your swallertails

and white choker, and you present yourself at the Vatican. His 'Oliness is delighted to make your acquaintance, hopes Her Majesty was quite well last time you saw her, and all her family—likewise your own. Then you jest kiss him on the knuckles, and say a few words, and the thing is done, sir. Next day old Mr. Cardinal calls on you again to know how you enjoyed yourself. 'Tip top,' says you. 'Then in course of conversation, he'll let out that he's a collectin' at present for a new toe for the stattoo of St. Peter or somethin', an' that as a very pertickler favour, he wouldn't mind givin' you a chance of subscribin'. That's the little game, Stokes,' says my friend."

"I'm obliged to you for giving me the benefit of it, I'm sure," said Mr. Henderson. "It is well to be prepared for what we have to go through."

"Don't mention it, sir," said Mr. Stokes, looking extremely pleased.

Ailie Henderson, who was sitting next her

father, had some trouble in keeping her risible faculties in due subjection. Her cousin, who was on her right, was too engrossed by the little widow's steady flow of lively observations to listen to Mr. Stokes. Never before had he seen the widow to such advantage, or found her manner more bewitching. Rings of golden hair curled low upon her forehead, sunny coils of plaits were wound around her head, but bereavement was written among them in rolls of whitest crape. Her eyes were blue as forget-me-nots, her lips red as strings of coral, her skin was fair as snow-drift, and her neck "like the swan's." The two little child-like hands that were twinkling about with fork and spoon were unadorned, save for one thick circlet of gold and a heavy mourning hoop, on which "In Memoriam" was graven. St. Frederick glanced from them to certain other hands on his left. These were not so small, but the fingers tapered more delicately, and the nails were extremely pretty. On the whole, he thought he liked

these hands the best. Just then, his eye having wandered across the table, he noticed that his *vis-à-vis*, Mrs. Stokes, was profoundly studying his beautiful right hand neighbour.

"Do you know these people opposite?" he asked. "They seem to be interested in you."

The little widow looked up in surprise; deliberately levelled her eye-glass at the family party, all three in succession, then dropping it, said quietly to St. Frederick—

"Perfect strangers to me."

Mrs. Stokes at first was inclined to be gratified by the inspection, the thought that passed through her mind being "P'raps she's near-sighted, and ain't recognised us yet." But when nothing came of the close examination, she heaved a sigh, and said to her daughter, "Well, Gracie, what d'ye think of that now? After all we did for her too!"

When the quartette rose from the table, Mr. Droning and his niece also made a move, and the niece rustling gracefully up to Ailie, took that young lady by surprise by affectionally linking her arm within hers.

"I hope you are not going to run away upstairs," she said, sweetly. "Do come and take your coffee in the salon, like a sociable being."

"Yes, do, Ailie," said St. Frederick.

Ailie was conscious of a strong inclination to make her escape up the staircase, but the pleading "Yes, do, Ailie" of her cousin decided her on overcoming it, and she allowed herself to be conducted to the *salon*.

The little widow, still pinioning her closely, deposited her on a velvet settee, and seated herself by her side.

St. Frederick crossed the room to join his uncle.

Then the widow, releasing Ailie's arm, took up her hand instead; but Ailie quickly freed it on the plea of adjusting a brooch.

"How I envy you, dear!" said the widow.

"Why?" asked Ailie, bluntly.

"Ah," sighed the widow, "because you engaged people are so idiotically happy!"

"Engaged?" said Ailie, blushing very deeply. "If you are under the impression

that I am engaged, you are very much mistaken."

"Ah, the form is nothing, child—the feeling is the same. Have I not gone through it all?"

"'Oh, there's nothing half so sweet in life as Love's young dream.' Do you think, my dear, that I cannot see how devoted you are to each other? Why your cousin idolizes you. And what a very good fellow he is! I am sure you must be awfully proud of him. Confess now?"

"I would rather not make my cousin a subject of discussion," said Ailie, haughtily.

"Proud little monkey," thought the widow, "but I have found out what I wanted to know, for all her reserve. Little fool to show her cards—*not* engaged—but evidently very much in love." What she said was—"Forgive me, dear; I did not mean to vex you."

Then the coffee came in, and St. Frederick brought his cup over beside the two ladies.

"Have you been to the Coliseum to-day?" asked the widow.

"No."

"Then I have a charming idea. Let us all go and see it by moonlight, to-night."

St. Frederick took up the idea enthusiastically.

"Ailie," he said, "that's just the romantic sort of thing you would like to do. Let us go by all means."

But Ailie, to his disappointment, replied that she was quite too tired to go out again.

The widow, affecting not to hear, sought out Mr. Droning, and announced that they were going *en masse* to the Coliseum; that the effect of it by moonlight was said to be something beyond description.

But Mr. Droning, too, said he would rather not turn out again that evening. His niece was considerate, and did not press him.

Returning to St. Frederick, she said—

"I am going to put my things on:" he opened the door for her to pass, then went back to his cousin.

"It is too bad of you, Ailie; do come."

But Ailie shook her head.

"I would rather never see the Coliseum at all, Fred, than see it in that woman's company! When she took my hand to-night, it gave me a creepy feeling all up my spine."

St. Frederick turned away, he felt annoyed. And at the same instant the little widow, while arranging her bonnet, was saying to herself—

"That girl hates me like poison. Well, there is not much love lost between us."

"Is there no one going but you?" she asked, in well-feigned surprise, as St. Frederick met her at the salon door. "How very shabby of the others! And how awfully unromantic!"

CHAPTER XVI.

> "If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
> Go visit it by the pale moonlight."

THE moonlight beauty of the ruined Coliseum was one thing; the weird effect of its skeleton windows, and the strange shadows cast by its broken walls, was another.

"It would not be difficult to imagine a few spectral beasts in the arena, and a throng of ghostly spectators in the tiers," said St. Frederick.

"Oh, hush, pray!" cried the little widow, shrinking closer to his protecting arm.

"You are not timid?"

"Not exactly timid, but I am very nervous."

"Beings of the sensitive order have generally highly nervous organizations," responded St. Frederick.

"And my nervous system has been so greatly tried."

"Ah! I am afraid it must have been," was the sympathetic answer.

"Oh, the wonder is that I am alive! or, being alive, not in a madhouse! It is marvellous what the heart can bear! Death would have been welcome to me!"

"Dear me! You suffered so much as that? You were very happy in your married life, I suppose?"

"Happy? We were in heaven! We idolized each other! But my darling, my idol was taken from me! and the world is cold and dark for me now!"

St. Frederick could find no words that he cared to utter, but gave a kindly pressure to the little hand that lay on his arm, and sighed deeply.

"I am making you sad by talking of my great sorrow. I did not mean to do that. We will speak of something else."

"Oh, no, no. I like you to tell me about it."

"Do you? And it relieves me to do so. It is the first time I have opened my heart to—to—a stranger."

"You must not think of me as a stranger after this."

"No? Well then I will think of you as a friend. I am so glad you are a clergyman. I can speak to you freely without danger of being misunderstood, you know."

"I like to hear you say that. I value your confidence very much, you have my entire sympathy."

"Yes; I feel that I have. And how few there are who can give us real heart sympathy! The only relative I have in the world is my dear old uncle. Of course I do not care to weary him with groaning over my grief! No, I think it my duty to be as cheerful as possible for his sake. He little guesses what I suffer at heart, even while talking and laughing gaily like other people. He is very good, but he has not much penetration."

"I am so glad he is so fond of you. He

pronounces your name always in such a very kindly way. By-the-by, what a very pretty name Cecilia is. Was your married name equally musical, I do not think I have ever heard it."

Cecilia sighed.

"It so recalls my lost happiness, that I have begged my uncle never to mention it in my hearing if he can possibly avoid it; and if you like the name of Cecilia so much, you must call me Cecilia too."

St. Frederick acknowledged the permission by gratefully raising Cecilia's tiny hand to his lips.

"I wish you would tell me about your husband," he said, "that is, if it will not pain you too much."

"Oh, how can I tell you? It was all so very romantic! And then I don't know what you will think of me? For I—I ran away with him to be married! Now you are shocked. Are you not?"

"How very dearly you must have loved him!"

"Dearly? To distraction! It was very wrong, of course, but if I could call my darling back, I would do it over again!"

"But why was it necessary to run away? Your uncle did not approve of your marrying him, I suppose?"

"Oh, well, my uncle has such deeply-rooted English prejudices, and my dear Carlo was a foreigner. He was—shall I tell you?—an Italian nobleman—far above me in rank, of course, but not wealthy; an exile in fact, from his home and his friends—he was a Roman Catholic too, and that of itself would have been an insurmountable barrier in the way of my uncle's consent."

"Did you live in England?"

"Oh, no; in France. I was so proud of him; he was handsome as a Grecian god."

"And mentally superior, too, no doubt?"

"Oh, yes; singularly talented. We had the *entrée* into the best society. But that life is all over. You know the proverbial hollowness of society. I have experienced

the truth of that proverb. Not one of the throng that used to gather round us can I rely upon now in my desolation. Ah, you don't know the cruel circumstances in which I am placed! My husband's family have ignored me! yes, and deeply wronged me!"

"Is it possible, Cecilia?"

"Oh, it is too true," she replied, with a little nervous shiver, "but all that is nothing. Nothing compared to the separation from my heart's darling—my beloved Carlo!"

"You have my deepest sympathy," said St. Frederick.

"And sympathy," said Cecilia, turning up to him her lovely face, with a tear-drop trembling in each beautiful blue eye, "is next to love—like love, it comes from heaven."

If any man of twenty-five, Churchman or layman, could have forborne to stoop down and imprint a kiss on the fair brow of that confiding countenance, that man was not St. Frederick.

Cecilia quickly dropped her face, and hid-

her eyes with her hand. St. Frederick saw that she was agitated.

"You must pardon me," he said, "I could not help it."

But had he known it, it was for the manner rather than the matter that apology was required, for it had been with a smile that the coral curves of Cecilia's lips had trembled.

Cecilia did not say in words that she could pardon St. Frederick's irrepressible impulse, but she delicately implied it by a reassuring movement of the hand that lay within his arm; then suddenly looking up at him again, she said—

"You told me to look upon you as a friend?"

"As a sincere friend."

"Though all the world went against me, would you still stand my friend? Would you for instance, help me if you could to maintain those rights which have been so cruelly alienated from me?"

"Cecilia, if I can ever do you good service

as a friend, you may rely upon my being only too happy to do so."

"I shall hold you to your word," she said. "You know my dear uncle is one of the best of men, but he is so extremely unpractical! He is not of the slightest assistance to me in my complicated affairs. He would rather that we went without our daily bread for the sake of feeding our enemies! That is his order of mind. Oh, he is an excellant man; yes, but quite too unworldly for this planet. So you will hold yourself prepared to be my knight errant? Only I am forgetting myself! *Widows* do not have knight errants, do they? Besides, the little cousin might not like it. What a dear girl she is! I mean to make her love me very much."

"Ailie is the last girl in the world to wish to prevent my rendering a friendly service to any one who required it," said St. Frederick, warmly, but yet with an uneasy pang at the recollection of Ailie's strong prejudice against his newly-elected friend.

"I am so glad we came out to-night," said Cecilia, "this talk with you has done me more good than you can imagine. I feel so very grateful to you for all your disinterested interest."

"Interest? I feel more than interested in you. But I do not know how it could be possible for any one to see you without feeling interested!"

Then he remembered, with another passing pang, that Ailie for one had seen her without being interested.

"Then we are sworn friends?" Cecilia said, sweetly. Let us shake hands to ratify the covenant."

They shook hands, not once, but twice, fervently, and then—well, then the poor little sorrowful soul held up her mouth in child-like innocence to be kissed, knowing that her friend, as a clergyman, would not misunderstand her.

Then St. Frederick, feeling that the effect of the Coliseum by moonlight was indelibly

impressed on his memory, proposed their return to the hotel.

They found the *salon de musique* and the *salon de lecture* alike deserted, so mounted the staircase together. Cecilia stopped short at Mr. Droning's door.

"I must look after my uncle," she said, "or he will be sitting up reading all night." Then before responding to his ready "Come in," she held out her hand to St. Frederick. "Good night," she murmured, "and thanks." Simple, ordinary words, but how expressively uttered! Surely the voice of this Cecilia had been a gift directly sent to her from her own patron saint! With this thought in his mind, St. Frederick had the effrontery to knock at Ailie's door.

"Ailie! Aunt Mona! you surely have not gone to bed already? I want to tell you about the Coliseum."

Aunt Mona opened the door, then returned to her seat by the fire. Ailie was sitting opposite to her with a book, looking the picture

of comfort, with the reflection from the glowing logs on the hearth playing over her pretty rose-coloured wrapper. With the exception of the "bird-cage" beds, the room differed but little from a salon.

"They might ask me to sit down," thought St. Frederick, but it did not seem to occur to either of the ladies to do so, therefore he stood still, lounging in the doorway.

"I expected to find you in the salon, Ailie," he said, in an injured tone.

"Did you? Oh, well, you see, I came to look what Aunt Mona was doing, and found she had a rabid fit of knitting on, and it was so snug and cosy-like beside this lovely wood fire, I could not find it in my heart to go down again. Besides, to tell the truth, it was just a trifle *triste* in the salon when the other people went out, and dear old Mr. Droning fell asleep in his chair, and you had run away with that silly little widow!"

Now, Mr. Droning's niece, who had just been bidding her uncle an affectionate good-

night, re-crossed the corridor to her room exactly in time to catch Ailie's concluding words.

"Silly little widow!" she repeated to herself, indignantly. "Not quite so silly as you think, perhaps, my dear; we shall see."

The expression had been scarcely more pleasing to the ear of St. Frederick than to that of the widow herself.

"I see you have no curiosity, either of you, to hear how the Coliseum looked in the moonlight," he said.

"I am sure it must be a very fine sight," said Aunt Mona, heartily, "I have seen Melrose in the moonlight with my dear husband."

Ailie murmured dreamily—

> "If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
> Go visit it by the pale moonlight!"

And then changing her vein, hummed the words of a duet which she and her cousin had learned together during one of his college vacations—

> "Meet me by moonlight alone,
> And then I will tell you a tale,
> It must be told by the light of the moon."

"Good-night, Ailie," said St. Frederick, impatiently, "you are in one of your most frivolous moods. Good night, Aunt Mona," and without offering to shake hands, he took himself off to bed.

CHAPTER XVII.

"TO BE WROTH WITH ONE WE LOVE, DOTH WORK LIKE MADNESS IN THE BRAIN."

ST. FREDERICK took himself off to bed, but not to sleep. The Coliseum loomed before him. Still he saw the striking shadows of the irregular pile exaggerated into a hundred fantastic forms, and still he seemed to feel the little hand of Cecilia closing tightly over his arm as the poor sensitive little thing had clung to him in her nervous terror; he could see the sweet up-turned face, &c.; and he could hear the soft murmuring voice again relating the sad story of her lost love, and her cruel wrongs. Then floated across his brain the words of the old duet—

"Meet me by moonlight alone,
And then I will tell you a tale,
It must be told by the light of the moon."

The words would insist on recurring to him, and always in the light running measure of the music in which Ailie had rendered them, as she had lain back in the depths of that easy chair, wrapped in the pretty bright dress, looking so completely at ease herself, and so utterly careless of his feelings as she had hummed them in that mischievous mocking way. Ten years ago, when she had teased and quizzed him, it had been his habit to box her ears in cousinly fashion, but that mode of punishment would hardly do now. Happy, light-hearted Ailie! Not a care to cloud her brow! Humoured by her father—petted by her aunt—loved by her cousin—for he did love her! Oh, yes, he was very sure of that. But what a contrast was her life to Cecilia's! Poor unhappy Cecilia, so miserable at heart, yet keeping a brave face to the world. Ignored by the friends of the husband whom she had so dearly loved, and who had set themselves so unrighteously against her, the widow and the fatherless. Then flitted across

the mind of St. Frederick the thought of another widow, who, for aught he knew, might be young and lovely as this one, and who might be feeling herself equally aggrieved by his assuming the property that had been in her husband's family, however much it might be his in the eyes of the law.

This was by no means a sleep-inducing thought. He put it away, and took another one, and then there rang sweetly in his ears the words, "You will be my friend, though all the world should be against me?" Yes, he would indeed. Of course he was more likely to be of service to her in any worldly way, than that good old bookworm of an uncle. Cecilia! What a nice name it was! Why could they not have called Ailie Cecilia? And yet Ailie, too, sounded pleasantly in his ears. It was a pretty little pet name. Yes, he would not have it altered if he could. Dear old Ailie, &c. But how perfectly unaccountable this dislike of hers to Cecilia. It was not only that she had no sympathy for her, the feeling

was not merely a negative one, it amounted to positive antagonism. His mind reverted to Ailie as a child, when in the softness of her heart he had seen her give her week's pocket-money to some unattractive old beggar—or after making some heavy purchase of chocolate or cakes at the confectioner's, bestow them all when she came out on any ragged little Arabs who might have been gaping enviously at her through the shop window. And yet this naturally kindly girl could steel her heart against another girl apparently as young as herself, who had known such bitter sorrow. Was it only in the garb of dirt and tatters that misery could move her to sympathy?

St. Frederick hailed the appearance of morning dawn. The bells rang out for Matins. He arose and obeyed their call. Could he not pray in his own way, even in a Romish church? he said to himself as he turned into the nearest one, which was just opposite the hotel. Afterwards he strolled

about the streets, noting with interest the early life of the city, and vaguely wondering in what quarter St. Paul might have dwelt "in his own hired house." In returning by the Corso, it occurred to him, when opposite to the post-office, that he might as well take the opportunity of laying in a stock of stamps. He had crossed the noble Piazza, and was about to enter the office when he was confronted by a graceful figure clothed in the deepest mourning—

"Cecilia! Out already! This is a pleasure I did not anticipate."

Cecilia laughed. "Is it surprising that any one else should feel the need of going to church, and to the post-office?"

"How did you know I went to church?" he enquired, offering her his arm.

"Because I happened to be there, but you were far too devout to look at me."

* * * * * *

They turned into the courtyard of the

hotel, still arm-in-arm, and so walked along the flagged passage, where they found Mr. Henderson and his daughter in occupation of the Indian cane chairs. The old gentleman returned their greeting with a gruff "Good-morning." Ailie looked up from her book, nodded, smiled, raised her eyebrows archly, and went on reading.

"The little cool cucumber," thought Cecilia, who had looked for some flash of jealousy in the large violet eyes, and had found nothing sparkling in them but amusement.

St. Frederick, piqued at Ailie's appearing quite as indifferent to his presence as she had shown herself the previous evening, halted in front of her and said, in an aggrieved tone, "Are you too much engrossed with your book to wish us good morning, Ailie."

"Oh, good morning, Fred," she said, glancing at him with a bright and perfectly happy expression on her face, and then resuming her reading. But she was interrupted again by the widow, who said in her most honeyed accent—

"You ought to have been with us, dear, we have had such a very nice walk."

"Two are company, but three are none, you know," laughed Ailie, holding up a face serene as the sky above them, but with a gleam of merriment still twinkling in her eyes.

This vexed Cecilia not a little.

"This girl," she said to herself, "this utterly unsophisticated girl, is laughing at me in her sleeve—yes, at me, 'the silly little widow.' She thinks, or affects to think, that I am 'setting my cap' at her cousin, and that he is not falling in love with me. Ah, well, let her think so—she shall see—what she shall see!"

"How could Ailie say a thing like that to her," thought St. Frederick, much annoyed.

Then the two passed on.

"Do you know I thought you and your cousin were engaged," said Cecilia, "but I can see now that she is unmistakably heart-whole."

St. Frederick bit his lips, and twirled his moustache—he was perplexed for an answer—of course he and his cousin were not engaged—he knew his uncle's mind on the subject of long engagements too well to have proposed such a thing before he was in position to ask for her as his wife, but for all that, it was extremely distasteful to him that she should treat him in so cold a manner as that others should think she cared nothing for him.

All he said was, "Ailie is sometimes very reserved in manner."

"Oh, well, these cold people are the best, you know," said Cecilia. "What is it that Byron says about them. Is it not that 'no others are half so nice, once you've broken their confounded ice?'"

"Quoting 'Don Juan,' Cecilia?"

"Oh, don't be shocked, please—but my Carlo was so fond of Byron—he was always quoting him."

"He was a good linguist, then?"

"Oh, he was very fond of English, and English authors."

They found Mr. Droning in the coffee-room having breakfast.

"Have you been out, Cecilia?"

"Yes, uncle," said Cecilia, "and now I am going away, upstairs, to write a horrid business letter." And, so saying, she tripped away, leaving the two gentlemen together.

"I had the good fortune to meet your niece at the post-office, Mr. Droning." St. Frederick took a chair beside the old clergyman at the table, and began to break his fast on the rolls before him, on having ascertained that his friends had already breakfasted.

"Oh, she was at the post-office," repeated Mr. Droning, with a relieved air. "I feared she might have been in some of these Popish churches—for I doubt the Catholics have got hold of her—her husband was a Catholic—but I did not know it when he came to me."

"Your niece has had a great trial."

"Ah, poor thing! poor thing! she married

most imprudently. Yes (noting the interested expression of St. Frederick's face), she married my organist."

If Mr. Droning had said that his niece had married an organ grinder St. Frederick could hardly have seemed more surprised.

"Really?" he interrogated, pushing back his chair.

"Oh, yes, poor girl! she repented bitterly afterwards—her letters were most trying to read—they lived on the Continent."

"Pardon, but I understood you to say that her husband was your organist."

"Yes—before they—before the marriage; after that he obtained a foriegn appointment, but he could never make enough to support them, they were always in difficulties, and I could not help them very much—for I am not a rich man. They were very unhappy together. His temper was so violent that Cecilia wrote me once saying she really could endure the life they led no longer, but had made up her mind to come back to me. But

I wrote to advise her not to do so, as it was now her duty to try and make the best of things, and, above all, not to do anything that might rouse her husband's temper, and that I would remit her monthly as much as I could spare. Poor fellow! he had his good points too, and was the best organist we ever had. When I heard he was dead I was glad Cecilia had not left him."

St. Frederick had listened to this recital in profound silence, and when it was ended he sat as one in a trance. It was so different a tale to the one that had been told him "by the light of the moon," and did not please him so well. How could he reconcile the two? He revolved them in his mind, roused himself up, and went on with his breakfast. An organist is not, as a rule, a Marquis. No; but a Marquis might come to be an organist. Had Cecilia not said that he was an exile, also singularly talented, his being an Italian made it all the more likely that he might have been an adept at music. Of course there was no

occasion for Cecilia's mentioning the fact of his having been her uncle's organist, especially as he had been so before, and not after the marriage. Then as to her account of their great happiness *versus* her uncle's story of their misery—he could reconcile the conflicting statements in this way; now that her husband was dead Cecilia no more remembered his unkindness and their unhappiness, she thought only of the love that had been between them when he had been in his softer moods. There might be some further discrepancies, but all, no doubt, capable of being explained away. After this "blending" process had been rapidly transacted in the brain, Sir Frederick felt more like himself than he had done some three minutes previously, and looked up quite cheerfully as the family of the name of Stokes entered the room [illegible] Droning was leaving [illegible] to the elder member [illegible] partiality for the younger [illegible] shook hands with [illegible]

"Fine mornin' sir," said Mr. Stokes blandly. "Enjoy your early walk, sir? We saw you and madam, the widow, returning from it;" then shaking his head and winking confidentially. "What did our mutul friend old Weller say?' 'Samivel, my boy,' sez he, 'beware o' the widders!' An' what old Weller said to Samivel, I sez to you, 'Beware o' the widders.' Solomon himself couldn't give no better advice, sir."

The "advice" was tendered with such an air of drollery, the eyes of Mr. Stokes twinkled with such genuine good humour, and withal with such an apparent absence of any intention of giving offence, that St. Frederick was obliged to receive it with a smile. At the same time feeling it necessary to assert, not only his own dignity but that of his cloth, he said very calmly—

"Your advice is well meant, I am sure, Mr. Stokes, but I cannot quite see that it is called for."

"Ah, sir," responded Mr. Stokes, "advice

in these 'ere matters don't do to be left till called for, and—(*filly de buffs*, Gracie, and tell him to look sharp)—I'm an old man, sir, an' you're a young 'un, but don't you be took in by a pretty face!"

Then leaning over the table, and sinking his voice to one of extreme earnestness, Mr. Stokes said, with a thump of his fist on the table to emphasize his statement—

"She's a pink and white devil, sir, that little woman in black. I'll say it again, sir (with a still fiercer rap on the table), she's a deceitful little devil!"

"Oh, James! Oh, father!" cried good Mrs. Stokes, with an expression of alarm. "Oh, pray, never say such hard things of nobody. They do say, you know, that the devil himself ain't so black as he's painted. And it comes nat'ral like to some folk to be deceitful."

"Don't you listen to my wife, sir, that's only her way, always a turnin' round to put in a good word for her enemies, but she

were that put out last night she could ha' cried over the ingratitood of that woman, a starin' at her through her eyeglass, and makin' believe as though she'd never seen us in her life, after all mother's kindness to her in Paris—that's her as was never to forget us till her dyin' day."

"Never mind, never mind, James; it wasn't for no thanks that I sat up with her poor husband, but only because it wasn't in human natur' to be sittin' in the next room a hearin' him coughin' by the hour, knowin' there was nobody awaitin' on him, without goin' to him, poor soul!"

"And where was his heartless creature of a wife, sir? Why out all the evenin' and half the night asingin' at concerts and parties along o' that good-for-nothin' singin' fellow, that lived with them. And then back they'd come together, all fun and frolic, and her dressed up like a play actress."

"But, James, that were all in the way of business. Singin' was their profession, they made their livin' by it."

"A pretty livin'! Starvin' would have been nearer it, if it hadn't been for you, mother, puttin' your hand in your pocket for them, and her friends sendin' of her money from England. And then to see her givin' herself airs, and callin' herself a Marquise, and indulgin' herself in every extravagance, no matter where the money came from! And then to hear the aggravatin' way she'd talk to her poor dyin' husband! I won't say he was just a lamb in his temper like, but she'd have killed a Job, she would. And sure and certain she killed him! Burst a blood vessel! Well, what made him burst it, but just through gettin' in one of his rages, over her sayin's and doin's with that fellow What's-his-name?"

"Sinner Jewseppy? Ah, that were very foolish of her to make her husband so jealous about Jewseppy, but bless you, father, there warn't nothin' wrong there, I'll take my oath o' that, she cared a deal too much for herself. She hadn't a mossel of feelin' for no one else!"

St. Frederick, who had listened to the Stokes' dialogue with great inward perturbation, although outwardly with an air of calm indifference so far, could no longer keep quiet, but with an impatient gesture of the hand signified that he would speak.

"Madam," he began, with the most chilling distinctness of tone, "allow me to assure you that you are labouring under an extraordinary mistake. The lady with whom you saw me walking this morning is the niece of an English clergyman, a most excellent man, and she is under his care in this hotel."

"That may be, sir," granted Mr. Stokes, drawing himself up and placing his thumbs in their favourite position in his waistcoat pocket, "and we haint got nothin' to say against the old gentleman, but all the same, sir, you may believe me that that young woman with the yaller hair, in the widow's dress, was, when she were at Paris some few weeks ago, the wife of our gal's drawin' master."

"Drawing master?" echoed St. Frederick, in anything but a saintly tone, "to my certain knowledge, sir, the husband of the lady in question was—was—*not* a drawing master!"

"Well, well, sir, you may happen to mean one gentleman and I may happen to mean another, but we mean the same lady anyhow, and when she were at Paris, she were the wife of one Signor Bianco, a drawin' master, and a very good master he were, too, for a furriner, till he fell ill and died, and all along o' her, as I allays will maintain."

"Dear father," said the daughter, coming round gently to his side, on noticing with distress that St. Frederick's demeanour had passed from something below zero to the boiling point of indignation, "dear father, don't say any more, please, about Signor Bianco."

Then St. Frederick, catching at a straw, appealed to Gracie, "do you not think with me, Miss Stokes, that this may be a mistaken identity?"

"If you ask me," replied Gracie, reluctantly, "I must tell you the truth, I do feel quite sure that the lady who looked at us through her eyeglass last evening is Madame Bianco." Then, turning again to her parents, "I am so sorry, father dear," she whispered, "that you thought it necessary to say anything about her."

In the midst of his mental perturbation, St. Frederick acknowledged to himself that Ailie's instinct had not erred in electing this little Miss Stokes for a friend. Bowing courteously to her, and in such a manner as to include Mr. and Mrs. Stokes as well, he rose from the table without more words, and walked away, sad and sick at heart.

"Yet, what after all did it matter?" he asked himself, as he strode up and down the flagged passage. "What could it possibly matter to him if Cecilia's husband had been a nobleman, a drawing-master, an organist, or all three combined, and moreover, what mattered it, if she herself were esteemed as a

devil or an angel, by a self-satisfied old dealer-in-china-man like this James Stokes? How very absurd of him to allow his mental equilibrium to be so easily upset, and yet—well, of course, it was a little unpleasant to find that one's neighbours at a public *table d'hôte* knew more of the antecedents of the lady to whom one had promised to be 'knight errant' than one knew one's self! Knight errantry in the nineteenth century! How his uncle would laugh to scorn any such idea! But the term was nothing, Cecilia had used it playfully, and had even retracted it by her words, 'But widows don't have knight errants do they?' *Au grand sérieux*, of course, nothing more had been meant on either side, but that he would give her such help in her complicated affairs as—well, as any other man would do, in his place. Yes, that was all." And yet the equilibrium of his mind could not be just yet adjusted.

Orders for the Vatican were in his pocket. If they were to be made use of, it was time

to be starting. But how possibly could he go in this troubled frame of mind to help Ailie to examine the works of the old masters with an appreciative eye! The next instant Ailie herself was beside him.

"Well, Fred," she said, "I do hope you have made a satisfactory breakfast? We really thought you were never going to be done. We shall not have too much time at the Vatican."

St. Frederick passed his hand over his forehead thoughtfully.

"Ailie," he said, "I don't think I can go, I feel out of sorts."

"Not well, Fred?" she asked quickly.

"Well," doubtfully, "I think I have a headache."

Ailie laughed.

"I congratulate you on its being only at the thinking stage. I hope it won't reach the feeling one. Most people who have headaches are generally pretty sure of the fact. You don't think you were moon-struck last night?"

"Ailie, you deserve to be turned into a mocking bird."

"Thank you, Fred, for an idea worthy of Ovid. Well, I can see you don't want to come with us. What changeable creatures men are! Yesterday you told me you were looking forward to seeing the pictures this morning, whereas, papa declared he had no intention of giving himself a crick in the back of the neck by staring up at them, that he had seen plenty of copies, and would take the originals for granted. To-day, papa announces his intention, nay, his impatience, to go and behold them, and you clearly don't want to go. Well, I shall offer your seat in the carriage to little Miss Stokes. She goes every day to copy."

St. Frederick could not repress a gesture of impatience. The sound of the name of Stokes was hateful to him just then.

"You had better take the whole family," he said, and moved away.

Ailie was hurt. Was this the same Fred who, yesterday, had been so devoted to her,

entering with her heart and soul into all the glory and beauty of St. Peter's? The same Fred who had been so pleasant and amusing during their delicious *tête-à-tête* lunch in the Ristoratore del Parliamento? The same who had been with her in the Forum, and on the Capitoline hill, recalling this and that stirring scene that had been enacted there?

Ailie felt now almost as out of sorts as her cousin. She thought she had a heartache, she said to herself, with a bitter smile. But that sort of pain was one which Ailie was in the habit of concealing, and assuredly no one who saw the expression of her face as she passed from one glorious picture to another in the Papal Palace, would have dreamt that she had one vexing thought to contend with.

Only once a shadow fell on it as she noticed two, who were either youthful *sposi* or *promessi sposi*, studying the paintings in one of the rooms by the light of each other's eyes. It was after that, that she observed to

her Aunt Mona that she thought she envied little Miss Stokes, who, perched before her easel, was entirely wrapt in her exquisite work. She was copying the Transfiguration. The face of the mother of the demoniac boy in the lower group was, beneath her touch, gradually assuming a more and more agonised expression.

An old grey-haired German artist was also copying the same work, and a young Frenchman, too, had set up his easel in a position which commanded both the original and the copy in progress under the skilled fingers of the fair English artist. But the girl had no eyes with which to return his admiration. They were entirely filled with the glorious subject before her.

"To think, auntie," continued Ailie, "that Gracie Stokes is at this moment sharing, as it were, the inspiration of Raphael, by doing what his hand did more than three hundred years ago."

"And I hope, my dear," said Aunt Mona,

"that she may have the great pleasure of finishing it, and successfully; for I remember that poor Raphael was cut off before he could complete it, and that, after his death, it was hung unfinished at the head of his bed. He was only thirty-eight!"

In the Sistine chapel, Ailie missed her cousin very much. The extraordinary crowds of figures in Michael Angelo's frescoes bewildered her. She wanted more help than her aunt and her father were able to give her in deciphering the meaning of the various groups. This was more especially the case with regard to the "Last Judgment."

"It would take weeks, instead of hours," she said, with a sigh, "to see these things as they ought to be seen."

* * * * *

St. Frederick, when left to himself, felt very much out of sorts, indeed.

Ailie had vexed him by having been in so

light-hearted a mood, when she might have seen that he was really suffering. Yes, he was vexed with Ailie, and he was vexed with Cecilia too.

Without allowing himself to believe the Stokes' story as it stood, he had an uncomfortable presentiment that, however much "more than the truth" they might have added in their exaggerated style, there was still some thin substratum of fact in it. It made him very uneasy. Although possible, it was not, of course, so very probable that father, mother, and daughter should all three be mistaken in the identity of Cecilia; and the fact of her having been so recently widowed tallied with one part of their version. But granted the identity, there would then arise this other ugly fact, that Cecilia had not merely avoided recognising the Stokes' family, as she might have done any other casual, undesirable acquaintance, but she had positively and deliberately stated that they were strangers to her.

How could he believe that anything but the purest truth could fall from between those pearly teeth and coral lips? And was he not pledged to stand her friend, "though all the world might be against her?"

He paced the flagged walk, lost in thought. Some one approached the window of the *salon de lecture*, and beckoned to him. It was Mr. Droning, journal in hand. He wanted to point out to St. Frederick some article in it interesting to them both as Churchmen.

St. Frederick glanced rapidly down the column indicated, but afterwards, instead of proceeding to discuss the article with Mr. Droning, as that gentleman had expected him to do, said, point blank—

"Mr. Droning, has your niece ever lived at Paris?"

"At Paris? Oh, yes; it was there her husband died. He had a fine voice, poor fellow—used to play and sing at concerts—and over-exerted himself; his health gave way—he had to give up music, and then

took to teaching drawing and painting at the schools. He was a clever fellow; but he and Cecilia did not suit each other. They seem to have been always at variance. They were both so young and headstrong—the one could not give in to the other, and I fear they were both a little too self-indulgent."

St. Frederick had winced at the mention of the drawing lessons; that was a further corroboration of the Stokes' story; but he said, steadily—

"At the risk of being thought inquisitive, Mr. Droning, would you mind telling me something of the affairs which now so trouble your niece? We had a very interesting talk together last evening, and in the course of conversation she hinted that her affairs were in some little complication. I do not ask you from mere idle curiosity, but because if it were possible for me to render any assistance to either her or yourself in endeavouring to right them, I should be only too pleased to do so."

"It is most kind—most friendly of you to say so," said Mr. Droning, earnestly. "And I have never met with a young man in whom I felt I could place such confidence on so short an acquaintance; but (shaking his head and sighing) I fear poor Cecilia is in a complete delusion about this property which she has taken it into her head ought to belong to her, because it belonged to the mother of her husband, who, it seems was an Italian Marchesa, but the Marchesa died many years ago; her son, my niece's husband, was not on good terms with his family; the property has passed into other hands, and from what I can gather, I should say Cecilia has not the remotest chance of obtaining it. But she is a wilful girl (for what is she but a girl? poor thing), and insists on following out her idea; says I know nothing of the world we live in, and that she must look after her interests. And this is why we are going to Sicily."

"As it happens, I also am going to Sicily on 'property business.'"

"Are you really! Then that is another coincidence."

The entrance of some other people to the salon interrupted their conversation.

Meantime Cecilia had written her "horrid business letter," which being translated (for it was a curious mixture of French and Italian) ran as follows:—

"GIUSEPPE, MIO CARO,—

"I am desolated at having heard nothing from you since we parted at Paris, but I come to write to you, taking it for granted that you are still as interested in this poor little Marchesa as when you lived under one roof with her only a few dismal weeks ago!

"I care nothing for the people who surround me now, Giuseppe. Nothing, *niente!* While they talk, my mind reverts to our merry times of old!

"How gay, how joyous we were! And how can I forget how you always took my

part, when Carlo, in his mad rages, would upbraid me for everything under the sun! Even although you knew that your doing so would bring down on your poor devoted head a shower of jealous wrath. Poor Carlo, he seemed to think we were too good friends sometimes, Giuseppe; but there he wronged us.

"And now, *mio caro*, listen. This little Marchesa is playing, oh, such a pretty little game! But it is slow, my friend—oh, very slow! And she has to be very goody-goody, and to mind her P's and Q's, and on no account to forget to dot her I's. This very morning she made an unhappy mistake—played a Don Juan card instead of a Dr. Watts' one! and shocked her partner accordingly.

"But, to drop jesting and become serious, she has a trump card in her hand which she means to play out to the best advantage. You would like to look over her hand? No, my Giuseppe; but perhaps you shall be al-

lowed to help me count the tricks. *Nous verrons!* Guess now if you can, who were my dread opponents at the *table d'hôte* last evening. Three extraordinary people name of Stokes. All dying, of course, for the honour of being recognised by 'Madame the Marquise.' But Madame, through the happy medium of her eyeglass, gave them to understand that she ignored their distinguished advances. And believe me, she did it so excellently well that you, my dear, would have clapped and cried *bravissimo.* How many Napoleons did that old plague of a woman lend me? Try and count up, Giuseppe, by way of a nice little healthy amusement, and when I get to 'kingdom come' (as I expect to do one of these fine days) then I will return them to her, with Madame the Marquise's compliments and thanks, by the hands of Madame's most *eccellentissimo* secretary, the 'Sinner Jewseppy,' as she used to call you.

"Write now, and tell me how the world

goes with you. Give me all the *on dits* and *bon mots* you can pick up, and think of me, my dear old good Giuseppe, as ever your friend of friends,

"CECILIA."

"P.S.—If I should want the dear old Giuseppe to do me a service of any sort, I may rely on him—*n'est ce pas.*

"Address to Grande Albergo, Catania."

Cecilia having duly addressed and stamped her letter, carried it downstairs in her hand. In the outer passage she met her uncle and St. Frederick issuing from the *salon de lecture.*

"How very solemn we look," she said to the latter. "One would think you, also, had had a horrid letter to write; I am glad to think mine is off my mind—I am such a poor little woman of business! I should always like a secretary."

"You should have given me some idea of what you wanted to say, and I would have

put it together for you," he said (for the sake of saying something).

"Ah, so you might! And so much better than I have done it, I am sure, but I did not think of that."

"At any rate, I can post it for you."

"I know you will laugh at me," said Cecilia, "but one of my pet performances is posting letters. I love to see them dropping into the mystical box just as much now as when I was a child. Do you know, I really fear I am very childish."

St. Frederick looked down in her face, studying it—the rosy tint of the lips, the clear blue of the eyes, the soft fair skin, the rings of golden hair curling over the temples, these were all, not to say childishly, but infantilely innocent looking.

"Oh, pray don't look at me in that dreadful way," she cried, and laughing, floated away with her letter. But as she turned, she found herself face to face with Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, who were coming bustling along

together. They were passing with heads sufficiently high, when, at the instant, the handkerchief of Cecilia must needs drop out from its small crape pocket on the side of her dress. St. Frederick moved to pick it up, but Mrs. Stokes was before-hand with him. Considering the proportions of the tabernacle of that lady, the active way in which she would contrive to move it about on occasion was remarkable. With very surprising agility she lifted the handkerchief, then taking a rapid step in advance of Cecilia, faced her in position, and drawing the deep-grief border along through her fingers till she came to one certain corner, said, "'C. B.,' your initials mum, I believe. I suppose, mum, you don't remember Mrs. Stokes? Mrs. Stokes what lodged in the *Shongsylizzy?*"

Cecilia looked earnestly at Mrs. Stokes as she said this, then gave a little start, and instantly a smile of singular sweetness broke over her face. She not only held out her exquisitely gloved tiny hand, but kissed Mrs. Stokes as though she had been her mother.

"Dear, dear, Mrs. Stokes, to think of seeing you here!"

"Didn't you see us all day yesterday, mum," asked blunt Mrs. Stokes (who had received the embrace helplessly, but had not offered to return it). "That must be an uncommon poor eye-glass of your's, mum, when you couldn't see us through it such a little way as just across the table."

"Dear Mrs. Stokes, you never mean to say that it was *you* who were my *vis-à-vis*? What could you have done to yourself that I did not know you?"

"There ain't no change in me, mum. Mrs. Stokes at Rome looks very much the same as Mrs. Stokes in the *Shongsylizzy*, I take it."

Cecilia, affecting not to hear, was looking round for her "old pet, Gracie," and saying how much she should like to introduce her uncle to dear Mr. Stokes; but neither Gracie nor her father had lingered for recognition. St. Frederick, meantime, had been watching the *tableau* from one of the Indian chairs. He was non-plussed. Some people, he knew,

were strangely oblivious, even of faces which they would wish to recall, just as others had a propensity for rushing up to complete strangers, and claiming them as their dearest friends. He would, at any rate, give Cecilia the benefit of the doubt. She, meantime, as she posted her letter, was saying confidentially to herself—

"My star is in the ascendant. Why did he not go out with his cousin this morning? Why does he affect my uncle's society. Ah, the 'silly little widow' knows why."

But when Cecilia returned by way of the flagged walk, there was no cavalier in waiting, as she had anticipated, to escort her whither she would. At that moment, indeed, St. Frederick, at the bidding of impulse, had hailed a fly that had been passing the courtyard, and was being rapidly driven to the Vatican. But he was all too late—the Henderson party were even then descending the *scala regia*, and all that he had the pleasure of seeing, as a spectacle, was a group of the

Pope's Swiss guards in their elaborate uniform.

"Hallo, boy," said his uncle, cheerily, "didn't your visitor come?"

"What visitor, uncle?"

"Why, the headache you were expecting to see."

"Oh, Ailie, Ailie, have you been making fun of me for the family amusement?"

"Yes, Fred, doing a little more of the mocking bird business, you know. I am sorry you have missed the pictures."

"So am I, now. And Ailie (taking an opportunity of speaking to her unnoticed by the others) I was very rude to you this morning, and I am very sorry." He took her hand as she descended the last of the steps, and her fingers closed over his just for one second in token of forgiveness.

"Dear Ailie, thanks," he whispered, then said, heartily, to himself, "she has such a nice good temper, and truthfulness is the backbone of her character."

"How did you enjoy the pictures, uncle?"

"More than the stairs," was the laconic reply.

"Oh, papa has so abused the Pope's stairs," said Ailie. "He says if he had only known how many there were to mount, the pictures should not have had the pleasure of seeing John Henderson looking at them to-day. He declares he has been 'sold,' and that we are to be fined all round for not warning him of what he would have to go through, or rather go up."

"My dear child, how excited you look."

This last observation Ailie was addressing to Miss Stokes, who joined them as they emerged on the Piazza.

"And no wonder! Congratulate me! if you please."

"Going to be married, my dear?" asked Mr. Henderson. "I hope it's the young Frenchman, and not the greasy old German!"

"Oh, no, Mr. Henderson, *ni l'un ni l'autre*; but I have sold my picture!"

"What, before you have finished it?" said Aunt Mona.

"Yes, actually. Just after you left me, the most beautiful creature in the world came up and gazed on the original picture. Then she noticed me and my copy, and chatted away to me so nicely in French (but she is an Italian), and then asked (very delicately, you know, so as not to hurt my feelings, in case I had any) whether I might be painting for love or money, because if my picture could be bought, she should so like to buy it. I said I was copying it because I was so very fond of painting, but that I should be awfully proud of myself if I could win some money. Then she was very pleased, and said she would give me 2,000 lire—that she was fitting up a chapel in her villa in Sicily, and that this picture was just the one she should like to have for it. And this is her card. She is a widow, she told me (though so young), and she is a Contessa, you see."

"It sounds as if it were all in a tale, and

I do indeed congratulate you," said Ailie, heartily. "I, too, should feel as proud as a peacock if I could earn any money by my very own work!"

"How mercenary these 'girls of the period' are," groaned Mr. Henderson.

"What a musical name your Contessa has," said St. Frederick, reading it off the card, "Agatina Carlini!"

"And there she is!" exclaimed Miss Stokes, "just getting into her carriage."

"And a very good taste in carriages and horses she seems to have, and a very fine-looking young woman she is, too," said Mr. Henderson, approvingly, through his glass. "What's that boy making up to her for? Lost his head already?"

"Didn't you see, papa? She dropped something as she mounted; her servant did not notice, and Fred has gone to pick it up."

"And has presented it with his best bow, too."

"For which she returned her best 'grazie,'"

said St. Frederick, coming back in time to catch his uncle's words.

"She really has a lovely face," said Ailie. "I wish I could have looked at it a little longer."

"I wish I might paint it," said the little artist.

"And what would *you* like to do to it, Fred?" asked his uncle, slyly.

"By-the-by," said Ailie, "I think I heard your papa say, Miss Stokes, that you are very clever at taking likenesses?"

"Oh, I used to amuse myself out of school hours in taking the girls' likenesses sometimes. I must show you my portfolio. By the way, I believe there is a sketch in it of Mons. le Marquis—poor man."

"Of whom?"

"Oh, he was our drawing master, but we used to call him Mons. le Marquis, because he was supposed to be a Marquis, only disguised in a cloud, you know (sinking her voice, so that St. Frederick, who was mounting

beside the driver on the box of their carriage, should not hear). He was the husband of that little widow, the clergyman's niece."

"You can't mean that?"

"Oh, yes, really. And your cousin knows—but I don't think he believes it."

"Does not believe what you say?" said Ailie, quickly.

"Well, it was difficult for him to believe, because the lady professed not to know us, but we knew a great deal of her at Paris, and lived in the same house. After I left school, father and mother stayed with me a while in Paris, instead of my going home with them; then we came on here."

"Did you like her?"

"Like her?" Miss Stokes thought it unnecessary to say in words whether she did or did not, but her face left Ailie in no doubt as to the state of her affections in that quarter. "She seems to have dropped her title," she continued. "At the house where we all lodged, in the Champs Elysées, she insisted

on everybody styling her Madame la Marquise; but we need not talk of her. Let us rather speculate on the history of my Contessa. She has such a glorious, beautiful light in her eyes when she talks to you; you seem to see into her soul. Oh, she is one of ten thousand."

"And altogether lovely," chimed in Mr. Henderson.

Ailie, of course, was on the alert directly to demand a fine for the apt quotation.

"She does not wear mourning, though I think you said she was a widow," observed Mrs. Herbert.

"Shows her good sense," quoth Mr. Henderson.

"And it shows your good taste to say so to me, John," retorted his sister-in-law, with a reproving smile.

"I have another reason for rejoicing over the disposal of my picture," Miss Stokes said, confidentially, to Ailie, "and that is because it will effectually prevent my dear father hanging it up in our drawing-room. Imagine

a picture like that in a room where people laugh and talk and dance! Although I once saw in a house, where they certainly ought to have known better, a full length picture of the Crucifixion hung conspicuously on a drawing-room wall."

"But will your father not be vexed, dear?" asked Mrs. Herbert.

"No, I think he will be too proud of his daughter turning out such a celebrity, as that her English work should be selected by an Italian, to be cross! And I will paint him another picture for our drawing-room. As long as I put some 'large-as-life' figures in it, father won't be particular as to the subject."

And then little Miss Stokes laughed merrily, which, however reprehensible, was nevertheless an offence committed in no unfilial spirit.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO ARE COMPANY—THREE ARE NONE.

At peace with Ailie once more in his heart, St. Frederick felt himself morally convalescent, yet was still conscious of a serious soreness on the subject of Cecilia, which he could not touch without wincing.

During lunch he proposed that the quartette should pay an afternoon visit to the catacombs.

The elder members, however, were so self-contented with their morning's work, that they declined to do any more that day. The younger ones therefore started by themselves, that is, were about to start, when St. Frederick had the unlucky thought that his fox rug would add to their comfort in the fly. The thought was unlucky, because the sending for the said rug entailed delay.

Delays are dangerous, and that particular delay proved fatal to Miss Ailie Henderson's enjoyment of her drive; and for this reason, that the addition of the rug was the means of another less welcome addition being made to their complement.

For, as the comfortable wrap was being borne along the corridor from its owner's room, it was recognised as an old friend by the *ci-devant* Madame la Marquise, and she and it appeared simultaneously at the door of the fly.

"Oh, you two shabby, sly things!" she exclaimed, "to be giving me the slip in this way; but now that I have caught you, you surely cannot find in your hard hearts to go away and leave me to explore by myself!"

"Giving you the slip?" repeated Ailie, "I was not aware we had made any appointment, and did not know that Mr. Droning was not with you."

"Oh, you are such a literal puss!" complained Cecilia, playfully. "But you know

I cannot be always [illegible] me everywhere, and I am [illegible] self!"

"But [illegible]

"that [illegible] in Rome [illegible] interest [illegible]"

"[illegible] out [illegible]"

[illegible]

[illegible]

"[illegible] are [illegible] [illegible]

"[illegible]

"[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

"Not for worlds, he would get lost in thought, and go stumbling about in the dark, and perhaps hurt himself seriously. So I may come?"

"If you will," responded St. Frederick, handing her in, and vacating in her honour the seat beside his cousin.

He had not wished Cecilia to join them, yet when she had taken her seat he felt that he liked to see her in it. There was a fascination about the little woman that he did not know how to resist. She is very fair, he thought, she is not surely false? He could not and would not believe it. As to Ailie, her "nice, good temper" was tried to the utmost. "Duets," she thought, "are so much better than trios," especially when the parts of two of the performers in the trio clash; for, from the instant in which she had felt the crape folds of the widow's skirts overlapping her own grey dress, she had been sure that there neither was, nor could be, one sympathetic chord between them. Those

very charms which fascinated her cousin struck her with nothing but antipathy. The rings of golden hair curling softly over the fair brow, were suggestive to her fancy of so many small coiled snakes. If the large round eyes were blue as the sea, she saw the sea's treachery shining in their depths. While as for the two fine *mobile* lines of coral which formed the mouth, they were probably typical of the serpentine windings of the widow's mind. Prejudices and antipathies went very deep with Ailie, but sulkiness was as foreign to her nature as selfishness, and although she might utter no polite conventional platitudes, she yet treated Cecilia with all due courtesy, and her cousin, who could generally read her mind, was duly grateful.

Cecilia, on her part, exerted herself to be agreeable. However, many faults she might have, obtuseness was not one of them—she felt that she was there in that little carriage on sufferance—self-invited and *de trop* as it were, and doubted in her own mind whether

she had acted with quite her usual tact, in putting herself in the position. The only thing she could now do was to make the best of it.

* * * * *

"Oh, Mr. St. Frederick. You were quite right when you said nervous people ought not to visit the catacombs! But I had no idea they were half so dreadful as this. Where are you? Oh, do come back for me, or I shall be lost! My torch has gone out. I am in the dark!"

Leaving Ailie with the guide, St. Frederick instantly retraced a few steps, till he found himself by the widow's side.

"I am sorry I left you," he said, "I thought you were following, and I was anxious to hear what the man was saying about the *frescoes*. Let me look for your torch."

"Oh, no, no! I dropped it into somebody's dust in one of those horrid stone

coffins! Never mind it, but oh, do give me your hand!"

He gave her his hand, he guided her steps, and was altogether kindly and good to her; yet she felt that something was lacking, his manner was sufficiently sympathetic, but the enthusiasm of the sympathy was gone, she thought she had not far to seek the reason. It was undoubtedly personified in Miss Ailie Henderson.

"How brave your cousin is," she remarked, "I always envy people who are not nervous or sensitive."

"I don't know about my cousin not being sensitive. I fancy she rather is very much so, but she has had nothing to try her nerves."

"And I hope she never may! dear girl!"

When the trio who had been out returned to their corresponding trio who had stayed at home, they found them in the salon. Mr. Henderson had got hold of a *Galignani*, and Mrs. Herbert and Mr. Droning were en-

deavouring to checkmate each other over a chessboard.

"I have a telegram for you, Frederick," said Mrs. Herbert.

St. Frederick opened it.

"What news, boy?" asked his uncle.

"Good," was the reply, and the despatch was forthwith submitted to Mr. Henderson.

Ailie looked pleased on hearing this much.

"Good news?" said Cecilia. "Won't you tell me what it is? It is so nice to hear good news."

Then she softly warbled—

"Good news from home, good news for me,
[illegible]"

[illegible]

"Oh, what a happy thing this is, Fred," she exclaimed, with brightening eyes. "This is, indeed, good news."

The wording of the telegram from Signor Bosco to the Rev. F. Monckton was on this wise—

"Madame telegraphs she will not dispute the property. Prefers amicable settlement."

"I'll tell you what, Fred," said Mr. Henderson, laughing and chuckling, "it seems to me you are in worse case instead of better, for the woman must mean matrimony."

"Oh, papa, how can you say so?" cried Ailie.

"That's the translation of 'amicable settlement.' Depend upon it, my dear, she'll show up sooner or later! Never mind, Fred, the widows are quite in your line, you know."

"Oh, hush, papa," whispered Ailie, "or Mr. Droning will hear you."

"Not he," muttered Mr. Henderson, "he's

too much taken up with the widow beside him. I'm blest if he and Mona have not been cooing away together like two old turtles."

"Turtle *doves* then, papa," laughed Ailie, "not turtles. You must have been thinking of your favourite soup."

"And very natural too, my dear, when I saw the *spoon!*"

"Well, papa, I am really ashamed of your frivolity, and I won't have my dear old Aunt Mona traduced," and Ailie frowned and ran away.

When St. Frederick went to dress for dinner he found Cecilia pacing the corridor.

"I am quite offended," she said, "because you would not tell me your good news. Did I not tell you all my affairs last night, and will you confide nothing to me in return? I am all the more interested about you, because uncle tells me you, too, are going to Sicily about some property you have, or ought to have there. Do tell me!" she pleaded, sinking down on a stool beside a statue.

Whether it was the syren voice, or the innocent face, or what, he could not tell, but in the next five minutes St. Frederick had told Cecilia the "state of his affairs."

"Ah!" she sighed (*àpropos* of the widow) "Is she young?"

"I don't know, but should say so."

"Ah, poor thing, God help her! You must confess it is hard lines for her. From my own unhappy case I can enter into hers. She may have now no means of support. She may have to toil for bread."

"I do not know," said St. Frederick, gravely, "that she would have been any better off had the estate not been left to me, because it would not likely have gone to her; but I should like, if possible, to make her the better for my possessing it, by making her some allowance out of it. I think she now sees herself that she has no chance, in the eye of the law, for she proposes, of her own accord, an amicable settlement."

Cecilia's face lit up with an arch smile;

some happy inward thought shone out of her round blue eyes.

"I have just thought of a plan," she exclaimed, merrily clapping her hands. "Share it with her! Make her a resident partner. Of course, she is young and pretty. I have a presentiment that she is very nice indeed. That would be 'an amicable settlement,' you know. The will would thus be carried out, and the eye of the law would look on approvingly."

CHAPTER XIX.

LES AFFAIRES AVANT TOUT.

THE early Matin bells appealed in vain to the ears of St. Frederick on the following morning.

He was paying to Nature the debt he owed her from the preceding sleepless night.

When at last it was discharged, and his eyes began to take in the bearings of his room, they were arrested in an idle journey up and down the brown and crimson zigzags of the carpet, by a break in the same in the neighbourhood of the door, and by the intervention of a small white oblong patch, bordered by a broad stripe of black.

Over this patch his mind began busily to exercise itself.

"It's an uncommonly un-English looking affair, and the idea in England, I fancy, is to

match the thing. Roman patching seems to be conducted on the contrasting principle," he muttered, sleepily.

But as it grew upon his eye, the patch revealed another un-English characteristic. It differed from the carpet not only in colour but in texture, being, indeed, neither more nor less than a piece of white paper deeply edged with black, and with certain hieroglyphics on its surface. How came it there, and whence?

To solve these two questions a physical exertion was necessary. In due course, the exertion was accomplished; the patch then resolved itself into a note directed to the Rev. F. Monckton. The writing was not familiar; yet St. Frederick had a vague, floating idea that he had seen it before.

This idea was dispelled, however, by the signature, "Cecilia," for it was assuredly the first written communication he had ever had from her.

It was to the following effect—

"My dear Friend,—

"Do you know, I had all but put Fred instead of friend. The pet name has grown familiar from hearing it dropped from the lips of the little cousin—although for my part I should prefer for you the more stately full name, Frederick. There is a dignity about Frederick which is more in keeping with your character. And you must know that, childish as I may be in most things, my pet conceit is that I have the gift of discernment of character. But it was not to tell you that, that I took the pen in hand. After such a long digression I had better begin over again.

"My dear Frederick, then (and after all, to go into another digression, why should I not call you Frederick, if you call me Cecilia?)

"Well then, my dear Frederick, I write to bid you good-bye. Yes, I have this evening come to the conclusion that my affairs require my presence at once on the spot. The spot,

by-the-bye, lies in the district beyond Messina, where we shall land. To-morrow morning, then, we start, my dear good uncle and I, for Naples, and next day we take boat for Sicily.

"Well, you are coming to Sicily, too, and I have a strong presentiment that we shall meet again.

"Were you wondering why I did not come to the *table d'hôte* last night? I fell into such a melancholy frame of mind when you left me, after our conversation in the corridor, that I could do nothing but sit and weep. Yes, I shed tears of sympathy for your young widow whom you told me of—so many things in her case reminded me of my own. And yet all this will have been but wasted emotion, if you should pursue the course I suggested! for then she could not fail to be in a quite enviable position. How very extraordinary if you were really to do so!

"Well, stranger things have happened. But, what am I talking about? I am quite

forgetting the little cousin, who will be so much nicer than any one else you know when her 'ice' is fairly broken. She will make a model clergyman's wife, I am sure.

"Well, now my friend, my dear friend, Frederick, for I know I may call you so, I have said good-bye, have I not? But I must add a word of thanks (and they are such heartfelt thanks) for all your kind interest in this poor little woman Never shall I forget your sympathy among the ruins of the Coliseum. Ah, human hearts are strange things, and sympathy is the mysterious link that binds them one to another. There is so little of it in the world, that when one finds it, one cannot prize it too highly. Even passive sympathy is sweet, but when it takes, as with you, the active form of help, then it is valuable indeed. At present, I go forth to fight my own battle, but before all is over, I may have to appeal to you. Feeling that I shall not do so in vain, once more, dear friend, adieu. Yours most gratefully, nay, even

affectionately, for I may surely have a little affection for you without wronging the little cousin? You see I am more impulsive than she is. If there is any ice about me at all, it melts under a kind look, or a kind word.

"Yours, then, Frederick,

"CECILIA.

"P.S.—I shall rise betimes in the morning, and run across to the church. I shall like a few minutes there before starting on my important journey. If you are there, I shall see you. I think it would also do me good to shake hands with you once more. You gave uncle your Sicilian address, so you may some day expect a *Cecilian* letter. This one I shall post with my own hands, by slipping it under your door."

St. Frederick straightway consulted his watch, and found, to his chagrin, that he was not only quite too late for early Matins, but that he had been long since due at the breakfast table by special appointment with Ailie,

and that by this time Cecilia must have certainly started on her journey without having "shaken hands with him once more." He was sorry for this. Yes, for he liked her; she was not at all the sort of person the Stokes' family thought her, but simply a very warm-hearted, interesting girl, more effusive in her feelings than Ailie. Not that he would wish Ailie to be different, not, at any rate, with regard to "effusion" towards friends of his own sex. But it had been very pleasant to receive Cecilia's warmly-grateful little speeches—more pleasant indeed to hear them than to read them in her writing, for Cecilia did not write so prettily as she spoke. The dignity of the full name Frederick was not a little impaired by the sprawling strokes which represented it; in truth, the familiar "Fred" in Ailie's firm, characteristic caligraphy, was, perhaps, the most imposing of the two.

* * * * *

"Anybody seen Mr. Droning this morning?" asked Mr. Henderson.

Ailie, who although she had finished breakfast, sat toying with a morsel of roll by way of keeping her cousin company, said that she, for one, had not seen him.

St. Frederick, devoting himself to *café-au-lait*, preserved a conscious silence.

But Mrs. Herbert looked up, and said, with some little confusion of face—

"Oh, I was going to tell you; they are gone!"

"Gone? Gone?" echoed Mr. Henderson and Ailie.

"Yes, they left this morning."

"Did you see them, auntie?"

"No, dear, but—they left a note with one of the waiters to explain!"

"The niece wrote the note, I suppose?" Mr. Henderson interrupted, inquisitively. "No? Then depend upon it, it was the uncle. What does he say for himself? Explanations were necessary, I am sure. By-

the-bye, how very blooming you look this morning, Mona. Your cheeks are getting quite rosy. Rome must agree with you."

"Oh, John, don't pray be so ridiculous," said his sister-in-law, growing more and more blooming, however, under his steady gaze. "Mr. Droning wrote last night merely to say that his niece having been called suddenly to Sicily about some affairs of hers, he regretted that he would not have an opportunity of saying good-bye to us, as he would not wish to disturb us in the morning, but that he hoped to meet with us in Sicily."

"*That* all the explanation he had to make, Mona?"

"Really, John, you are too bad. You may read the note if you wish."

But although Mrs. Herbert said this, she did not follow it up by producing the said *billet.*

"She leads him a nice dance, that niece of his, if I am not mistaken," quoth Mr. Henderson. "Can't say that I admire her as much

as our friend Frederick here. Why, I'm blest if the boy don't look as blooming as his aunt. What a healthy place Rome must be. And yet it has a bad name! How do I look, Ailie, my dear. Are my cheeks rosy, too?"

"We must get you to Sicily, papa, dear, before we can compliment you," was the Machiavelian reply.

CHAPTER XX.

"EN PENSION."

On the Saturday evening preceding the Monday on which Christmas Day fell, a woman, whom we have heard described as "one of ten thousand" and "altogether lovely," was seated among a goodly company in the salon of a fashionable *pension*, at Naples. She was dressed with careless elegance; her graceful train of silk trailed over the soft pile of the carpet, while a shawl of rich creamy lace partly enveloped her beautiful shoulders, and partly draped, *à la Neapolitan*, her exquisitely shaped head. There was a queenly grace about her every movement, which was yet entirely natural and unaffected; even self-consciousness seemed absent.

The people who surrounded her were about as diverse in their nationality as the popula-

tion of Naples itself. They were French, English, Scotch, Italian, American, Russian, Austrian, and Greek; but whatever their nationality they were one in their admiration of the peerless Sicilian beauty, the Contessa Agatina Carlini.

She looked by no means out of place in the salon, for its appointments were all in good taste, and its comfort bordered on the luxurious. That innate love of drapery which leads the humble Neapolitans to deck alike their itinerant stalls and the shrines of their favourite saints with miniature curtains of brilliant hue, had also led the more aristocratic proprietors of the *pension* to curtain not only every window, but also every doorway of the salons with rich warm-looking folds of velvet.

At the moment of our introduction to the salon, the Contessa was quitting a card-table, at which she had been playing whist with an old German Count, an Austrian Baroness, and a Russian officer, to take a seat beside a lady who was dispensing tea and coffee at a table

in a corner. This lady was Madame Tomaso, the presiding genius of the *pension*; she was a handsome woman, inclined to *embonpoint*, and with the national *dolce far niente* written on every lineament of her face. The Contessa appeared to be on excellent terms with her, but after chatting gaily for some little time, she carried her cup of coffee over to a sofa, attracted there by the presence of a young English girl, to whom she wished to talk for a change. They spoke in French till a young countryman of the English girl's joined them, and asked the Contessa if she did not talk English. She could speak it "something," was the reply, but she did not like the English.

"The language or the nation?" the Englishman enquired, to which the Contessa was fain to confess, but with a radiant smile, that really she liked neither the one nor the other. "They were cold, oh, so cold, and serious, very serious." One look at the countenance of the Contessa was enough to convey the conviction that such national

characteristics as "coldness and seriousness" would find little favour in her sight. The word "cold" between her warm, red lips, seemed a very foreign adjective indeed, and the sunny sparkle of her eye, as she uttered the word "serious," belied the idea that she could know the full meaning of it. An animated conversation ensued, during which the English young lady fought bravely for the character of her nation. She was an attractive girl, with large violet eyes, dark long lashes, very dark hair, and very pretty teeth. Her dress was of soft clinging cashmere simply made, yet becoming her well. As to her cousin, the Rev. F. Monckton, it would appear to have been his aim and object throughout the rest of the evening to convince the Contessa Carlini that there was one Englishman, at least, who was not so "cold" as she might have imagined.

In another corner of the salon Mr. Henderson was doing battle as John Bull with a Jonathan from the States, while on the neigh-

bouring sofa Mrs. Herbert was holding sweet converse with a friend of her youth, a Scotch widowed lady, whose residence in the *pension* had been the magnet which had attracted the quartette within its walls. They had arrived from Rome but some few hours previously to our meeting them in the salon, and it had been a pleasant surprise to both Ailie and her cousin to recognize, among its inmates, the "most beautiful creature in the world," the patroness of Gracie Stokes. The Contessa, on her part, had at once remembered, and seemingly with pleasure, the face of the handsome young Englishman who had restored her card case to her on the day she had visited the Vatican.

She and her good old *gouvernante* (she told him) often came to the *pension*. She felt quite at home with Madame Tomaso, and liked to rest a few days with her on their way to and fro between Sicily and Nice—her dearest friends lived in Nice, and she, herself, lived in Sicily. They could not come to her,

so from time to time she went to them. She had come from them just now—had only stayed a day or two at Rome—liked Naples infinitely better. The life of it, and the gay bright colouring of it suited her better than solemn stately Rome.

* * * * *

"Fred, are you quite, quite sure that the almanac is correct, and that this is Christmas Eve? How can I believe it, with this warm air blowing so softly on my cheek, the Mediterranean here at my feet, and Vesuvius over yonder. Could anything be prettier than its wreath of white smoke curling upwards in the sun? Do you know, I always fancied the smoke was black—it is so pleasant to find it white instead. To believe it Christmas Eve morning, you know, I ought to be within sight of Kensington Gardens, feeling myself wholesomely cold, and daily anxious that the wind should not be too sharp for my complexion."

"The water is like to be too much for it

in the meantime, Ailie," said her cousin, drawing her back from the parapet over which they had been gazing down into its blue depths. The parapet separated the sea from the Chiaja, and now and again as some rolling wave would dash against its base, it would rebound to break over the top in sparkling wreaths of foam—in one of these the cousins had just been caught.

"My geography gets more and more practical," said Ailie, laughing, as she wiped away the foam. "This page of Nature's own book, about Naples, will be very, very nice to learn I think; besides, the Contessa has promised to help me—one lesson is to come off this afternoon. I am to drive with her (she has her carriage here, you know) round the Posilipo way, and I ventured to say you would go also Fred, for it strikes me that if I fell in love with little Miss Stokes at first sight, you fell in love with the Contessa! Confess St. Frederick."

"The only confession I shall make, Ailie,

sonorously as Dr. Samuel Johnson l
she could have fancied they were all
own pew in old Kensington Churcl
when the familiar hymns were sung
not help whispering to her cousin, "th
the songs of Zion in the strange land.'
On her way back from church sl
seized with a fit of curiosity to turn
Catholic church which they were passi
There they found the Christmas sto
bodied in "a manger." In the inter
a sort of grotto of about the size of a
doll's house sat a figure representi
Virgin in a dress of crimson satin tr
with gold, and over it a bright blue
At her feet lay a naked waxen baby, to
she was directing the attention
Magi, who appeared to have just arri
striped trousers, and coats bound wit
satin. This church, Ailie afterwards
was one of the poorest of the 290
Naples possesses. Those which the q
subsequently visited delighted then

from their wealth in marble, Mosaic, and frescoes. But the great treat of all was San Martino, which they visited on the day after Christmas Day. Since their arrival at Naples they had been daily besieged by an army of fly-drivers, all equally anxious to further their geographical knowledge. On this Tuesday they yielded, and allowed themselves to be driven up the steep hill on which the monastery of San Martino had been founded in 1325. They were rewarded beyond all expectation. In the church St. Frederick was lost in wonder and admiration, and as the vision rose before him of a certain other church unadorned and bare, a feeling of covetousness entered into his soul. Ailie's lament, as she went from room to room, and from chapel to chapel, each more beautiful than the other, was, "Oh, that Gracie Stokes were here, she would appreciate, so much better than I can, all these glorious works of Ribera, Guido Reni, Paolo Veronese, and the others."

What Mr. Henderson apparently enjoyed as much as anything was the polite air of deference which Mrs. Herbert assumed on passing the figure of the *venerable* old Franciscan Padre in the museum, never for a moment doubting but that his reverence was alive.

He was also surprised into admiring the magnificence of the view from the windows. Down below, the lively city, on the left Vesuvius and the lesser hills beyond, with the town of Castel-a-Mare at their base, the white houses dipping, as it were down into the water; farther out in the blue sea lay Capri, to the right the hills of Posilipo and the mountains of Ischia. The charm lay not only in the beauty of the scene; it was enhanced tenfold by the happy medium through which it met the eye—to wit, the soft, clear, smokeless Italian atmosphere.

Mr. Henderson, having rapidly photographed the scene on his brain, made good his retreat to the carriage, long before the other

members of the quartette could tear themselves away. When at length they did so, St. Frederick found himself assailed by an importunate applicant, anxious to effect a sale of the old monastery wine. But St. Frederick would none of it, and assured his uncle, as he took his seat, that the Neapolitans, as a rule, were terrible cheats; that, of course, they charged three times its worth for the wine, which ten to one was spurious.

"Frederick," said his uncle, "I admire your sense and your sentiments. Now let us depart—no, Miss Ailie, you are too sharp this time, I am not going to say 'depart in peace;' so you don't catch your fine—how, indeed, would peace be possible with those chattering fellows pestering St. Fred to buy their trash?"

The "Andiamo" was given, but had hardly taken effect, when a suspicious sound of jingling attracted attention to a deep pocket of the Ulster coat of one of the party. In vain the owner of the garment surreptitiously

inserted a hand in its depths with an air of innocent unconsciousness. The jingling was allayed, but the necks of two smuggled bottles stood confessed. Ailie was down upon him at once.

"San Martino Chartreuse, papa? two bottles? And after all you have been saying! Now that was very sly! You see, Fred, he is not to be trusted a minute alone."

"How much did they get out of you, uncle?"

"O, the fines will cover the sum. I thought it would be a good investment for them, you know."

But to this the other members of the quartette demurred, and Ailie, as purse-bearer, resolutely declined to yield them up. The drive back was very enjoyable; they were all in excellent spirits; the afternoon was gloriously fine, and the variety of character which they encountered on the road amused them. For the peasants, their day's sales effected, were returning to their

homes in the country, some on foot, some bestriding their donkeys, and others crowded in family parties in their own private carts, or in flys, but all with a happy-go-lucky expression on their countenances and a corresponding brightness in their attire. The young women were, for the most part, bareheaded, with ornamental pins or knots of ribbon stuck in their thick dark plaits of hair, but the older women and the children had their heads invariably tied up in coloured handkerchiefs.

Now and then a woman would be seen in the old picturesque Neapolitan costume. Ailie was delighted with all this, and in the Toledo she found the scene quite exciting, for it was, as St. Frederick remarked, as if "Whitechapel, St. Giles, and the Seven Dials had been let loose in Bond Street and St. James's during the fashionable driving hours of the London season."

Side by side with the carriages of the *élite* ran the little Neapolitan flys, with horses.

not much to boast of in the way of flesh, but with harness twinkling all over with small, round brass plates, like coins, and for their "fare," perhaps, a load of the market people with their baskets.

Priests, beggars, and Capuchin monks, with their shaven crowns and dirty-brown hooded cloaks, helped to make up the picture. Here, they met a religious procession; there, a funereal one, with the hearse emblazoned with gilt like a Lord Mayor's coach, and the mourners clad in white from top to toe, with their eyes peeping out of two round holes—a very great improvement, Ailie thought, on the hideous black funeral she had seen at Leghorn.

Presently they met the Contessa, driving with her *gouvernante*. Nothing would please her but that Ailie should *fare una girata* with her. Without being expressed, it was understood that the invitation extended to St. Frederick. Neither of the two were loth to accept it. During the few days they had

been domiciled under the same roof with Agatina Carlini, they had become very friendly with her. The more they saw of her, the better they liked her. It was not only that she was physically charming, she was mentally gifted as well. She had read much in several languages, had been in many foreign countries, and had a pleasant, interesting way of describing the places and the people she had seen. She had the further charm of being a good listener, and would become absorbed in any conversation that was going forward as one "at leisure from herself."

But there was not much conversation possible in the Toledo just then, for the bustle and the noise were at their height, and competition seemed going on among the flymen as to who could crack his whip with the most stinging noise, or inspire his horse with the loudest, longest-drawn out "Awh—h—ha!" That peculiar and unwritable note ever tickled Ailie's fancy, but Mr. Henderson could never

hear it, or the indescribable cracking of the whips, without vituperation of the foreign "fool of a cabby!"

The Contessa's carriage was one of the latest to leave the Toledo that afternoon, for it was the cousin's last opportunity of driving in it. The next day they were to sail for Sicily. They had very much enjoyed the Christmastide at Naples, and had seen the city to advantage in its festive garb, with its fruit shops and stalls, each like a fairy bower, festooned with evergreens, and brightened with the hanging vermillion bunches of the small Italian tomato, which is round and red as a cherry, and grows in clusters thick as grapes.

The fresh gold of the oranges, the vivid green of the various salad herbs, and the pink of the pomegranates, all mingled with each other in a sort of vegetable mosaic, while in some corner or other of either shop or stall there was sure to be found a Virgin and Bambino, or a picture, or the image of a patron saint.

The elder members of the quartette had also been very content with their stay, more especially Mrs. Herbert. As the travels of the Rev. D. Herbert had not extended to Naples, she had no interest of a melancholy character attached to the place, but had gone about with her Scotch lady friend in unusually good spirits, and to the great neglect of her knitting.

As to Mr. Henderson, when out of doors, he had been either amused at the novelty of the life going on around him, or disgusted by its eccentricities, and the occasional unsavouriness of the streets, according to the mood of his mind, or the condition of his body. Within doors, he could generally find some American cousin ready to discuss Anglo-American politics with him, or if Madame Tomaso happened to be at home, he would try her ingenuity at guessing what his little Anglo-French speeches might be [illegible] to mean. With regard to the "nutrimento" of the pension, it was a happy thing,

as Ailie had remarked to her aunt, that her papa had taken kindly to macaroni, otherwise he might not have fared so well as could have been desired.

But on Christmas Day, the dinner was a happy embodiment of English and other national tastes, beginning as it did with oysters, progressing with eels (which the Italians eat in honour of the Nativity;) including, amongst its courses, one of wild boar, one of roast beef; and winding up with a very excellent and orthodox plum-pudding.

There were several visitors at the *pension*, to whom our quartette bade *addio* with regret; but when it came to parting with the Contessa, she would not say good-bye to them, but shook hands warmly with an "*au revoir*."

CHAPTER XXI.

NON PER GIUSEPPE.

CECILIA sat in her room in the Grande Albergo, Catania. If she raised her eyes to the window she could see the grand old mountain of Etna, if she stepped out on the little balcony and looked well to the right, the vivid blue of the Mediterranean came within her range. But Cecilia's eyes were occupied with neither mountain nor sea, they were intently reading and re-reading a certain paragraph of an Italian letter which lay spread out upon her lap.

"Think you, Carissima, that your Giuseppe laments that you like not the friends who now surround you? He laments it not, for he feels that you will not care to live among them for long, but will be the more willing to turn back to the old life. You know well, Carissima, how devoted to you I have ever

been. Now that I have you no more associated with me, the applause of the multitude, when I sing, delights me nothing, and voices of other women sound strangely in my ear. Return to me, Carissima! As our voices have in the time past sweetly blended together, so now henceforth let our lives be mingled. My Carissima, my bellissima understands. Her Giuseppe lays his life at her feet, and she accepts the poor offering? Si-si, she does it, does she not?"

This was the paragraph which enchained Cecilia's eyes. Opposite to the Albergo stood a very odd looking church. The belfry arrangement was peculiar, it was directly above the church door, and resembled a cart-shed in an English farmstead more than anything appertaining to an ecclesiastical edifice. The bells were swung by short ropes. It was the duty of a *ragazza* to mount the rude balcony to set them ringing, and this duty he ever faithfully fulfilled, in a quick, impatient, jerky way of his own.

It was the evening performance of the *ragazza* on one of the bells which now roused the absorbed Cecilia from her letter. The first toll warned her that it was time to be dressing for dinner. When her toilette reached the stage which demanded the assistance of her mirror, Cecilia gazed into it enquiringly—

"Per Giuseppe?" she asked, of the fair apparition that faced her. The ivory brush paused in its passage over the ripples of her golden tresses for the answer. The apparition shook its head, and softly murmured from between two smiling ruby lips, "*non per* Giuseppe—not for Giuseppe."

CHAPTER XXII.

"ALTHOUGH" THEY WERE "ON PLEASURE BENT," THEY "HAD A FRUGAL MIND."

WHILE Cecilia was questioning and answering her reflection in the mirror, four people with whom she was acquainted had embarked in a small batello, and were being paddled through the maze of boats that lay in the Bay of Naples, out to a steamer bound for Sicily. The "fine old English gentleman," the lady tall, grey, somewhat faded, yet so sweet looking still; the young girl with the dark hair, the violet eyes, and "remarkably pretty teeth," and the good looking young fellow by her side, are all as familiar to us personally as they were to Cecilia.

The young girl's face wore a bright expectant look. It was a great thing to Ailie to be now actually upon the waters of the classic Mare Internum, and was she not presently

to see Naples in full perfection, as it ought to be seen from the sea, was she not to pass Capri, where the wonderful old Garibaldi was spending the evening of his life; when morning dawned would not Stromboli, with its ever smoking chimney stand revealed? Above all, were they not to sail between Scylla and Charybdis?

Aunt Mona's countenance was placid as usual, but the far off melancholy look that had been so frequent in her eyes was gone. Her spirit was evidently benefitting by the change. She had enjoyed her stay at Naples, but this crossing over to Sicily did not seem to be a proceeding to which she was at all averse.

St. Frederick, although it was ever a pleasure to him to find himself in a boat, wore his most stern expression, and sat with folded arms in defiant attitude.

"Four francs," he called out to the oarsmen, in his boldest Italian, "four francs is your fare, I will give you six, but neither more nor less."

"*Non! non!*" shouted back the head boatman, "*duodeci!*"

"The rascally Neapolitan cheat!" cried Mr. Henderson, with the memory of the San Martino Chartreuse fresh in his mind.

"I will not give you twelve francs," reiterated St. Frederick, "you will be only too well paid by six!"

But the man gesticulated energetically, and insisted loudly on his "*duodeci.*"

St. Frederick replied by a wave of his hand by which he intended to command silence, but the boatman interpreted the gesture as expressive of submission to his terms, and rowed on gallantly for a time. St. Fred was then at his leisure to enter into his cousin's enthusiasm over the scene that lay spread around them, but he was before long recalled from sentiment to matter-of-fact by a peremptory summons to pay, from the Barcarolo.

"*Pagate*" said the man, determinately holding out his hand, "*Pagate*, pay."

"When we get to the steamer, my friend," responded St. Frederick calmly.

"No, no—pay now—now—now," was the excited reply.

St. Frederick shook his head.

The man laid down his oar.

St. Frederick expostulated, in vain of course, the man did nothing but frantically repeat "*Pagate*" and "*duodeci.*" "Twelve francs! pay! pay!" And as a further expression of disgust, tore off his cap, and threw it on the top of the idle oar. St. Frederick would not give way an inch; but he felt considerably non-plussed. His uncle rapped his cane fiercely on the bottom of the boat and swore, under his breath. Mrs. Herbert grew anxious and felt nervously for her purse, wishing St. Frederick and his uncle would only turn their backs, so that unseen she might purchase peace at the enemy's terms; before their eyes she knew she dared not do it. Ailie looked on sorely inclined to laugh, but in presence of the aggrieved faces of father

and cousin, dared not yield to that inclination.

Suddenly the Barcarolo put on his cap, took up his oar, and rowed on. The quartette came to the happy conclusion that he had come to a better mind; but not a bit of it, for as they approached the steamer, instead of landing them, the wily Neapolitan paddled them on considerably beyond it.

Then the indignation of uncle and nephew knew no bounds. The latter would fain have seized the oars himself, the former would gladly have ducked the oarsman beneath the water.

Whether it was that the Barcarolo read their desires, or that he had given up the hope of extorting the twelve francs from such hard British material no one knew, but he turned the boat round of his own accord and pulled steadily back in the right direction.

Then leaving it to the guidance of his subordinate, he approached St. Frederick, and, laying his hand on his arm with an almost paternal air of affection, said—

"Give it to me—give it to me."

"Six francs," quoth St. Frederick.

"Yes, yes; six francs. Give it to me."

Then turning to Ailie, who, at this new turn of affairs, was suffering more than before from suppressed laughter, said—

"He is a good gentleman; yes, he's a very good gentleman—he will give me a *buon mano*—he will give me for macaroni—he will give me for a bottle of wine."

Ailie's Italian was equal to the occasion; indeed, it was much purer than the man's own jargon.

"They are," she said, "two very good gentlemen, but you have used them very badly. And I am sure they will not give you a '*buon mano*,' but you have amused me so much that I will give you one instead."

It was but a lire that she gave him, but he was delighted.

"As he well might be," said St. Frederick, "for his six francs have already overpaid him, to say nothing of his rascally behaviour.

And I really think, Ailie, it is too bad of you to have had your sympathies on his side."

"She must have more money than she knows what to do with," said her father. "I shall fine her heavily for her misdemeanour by way of relieving her of some of it."

It was well for Ailie she had been amused in the boat. There was little amusement in store for her on the steamer, for—to use Mr. Henderson's words—she and her Aunt Mona were "laid upon the shelf almost immediately," and neither Capri, Stromboli, Scylla, or Charybdis did either of them behold.

"You've skipped a whole page of your geography, miss," said her father, as they entered the harbour of Zaneele, the sickle-modernised Messina, the next morning. "And the worst of it is, I've had to pay for it all the same."

"Yes, papa," replied Ailie, trying to smile. "I know to *my* cost as well that I have missed the page between the Bay of Naples and the Straits of Messina; but I hope to go

through this part of the book again and in better form, although it will be backwards."

Her cousin helped her ashore from off the small boat to the Quay, and drew her arm so tenderly under his own that she could not help looking up to him and saying—

"I think, Fred, you have forgiven me for laughing and for rewarding iniquity in the boat at Naples."

"Forgiven, yes; but I don't forget it, you know."

"You had no trouble with the Barcarolo here?"

"No, because did you not see that man who was with us, and who is now seeing about the baggage; he is the commissionaire from the hotel where we are going. He manages the boatmen. It is only a step or two to the hotel. Take a firmer hold of my arm."

Ailie gladly obeyed the injunction, for in truth she felt very much as if she were crossing the street in a boat.

Mrs. Herbert accepted the arm of her brother-in-law with much the same sensation.

But once the two ladies were installed in the bright room allotted to them, which overlooked the harbour and the Straits, and when, moreover, they had been refreshed by food and wine, they declared themselves restored in body and mind, and quite ready to be taken out for a drive.

A more elegant carriage than the one put in requisition might be found in most places; but no better fellow than the driver need have been desired.

Of his own free will he stopped when they came to a "*fiume*" long enough for the imagination of Ailie and St. Frederick to picture a mountain torrent rushing down it to the sea. If a fine *carrozza*, with proudly-stepping horses, drove past them, or a house of goodly proportion came into sight, he deemed it part of his duty to tell the name of the owners of the same.

After driving for some way along the road which coasts the sea, he pulled up at the gate of a villa, and politely signified to the quartette that they might alight.

"*Ma perchè?*" enquired St. Frederick.

"Because it has a very fine *giardino*," was the answer. "And it belongs to the Marchesa San Giuliano."

As the quartette had not the pleasure of knowing the Marchesa, they did not seem to see their way to visiting her little country seat, and said so.

But their coachman explained in his best Sicilian-Italian that the Marchesa was not at home, but was always pleased that strangers of distinction should visit her *bel giardino*. And so saying, he applied for admittance.

A middle-aged woman obeyed the summons. She and the driver exchanged a few words in their own lingo, and the quartette, seeing it was the correct thing to do, descended and followed the woman up some stone steps within the wall of the garden.

A woman with two goats brought up the rear.

At the top of the steps the goats were led aside to be milked, and the "distinguished strangers" followed their cicerone through the garden walks. They went but a very little way before exclamations of astonishment and delight escaped from certain of them.

Anything more unlike an English garden in mid-winter it would have been hard to find.

Roses in full bloom, fuchsias, heliotropes, geraniums and many other known and unknown flowers and flowering shrubs were growing in profusion. Lemons, oranges, citrons and prickly pears hung upon the trees, or lay scattered over the ground.

It was no straight and formal garden, but full of pleasing surprises, little meandering footpaths, shady walks under leafy boughs that crossed each other overhead, here an unexpected grotto, there a statue, a shrine,

or a fountain; but the crowning delight of it all was the *bella veduta* from a certain terraced corner.

Looking down from this point they saw the beautiful expanse of blue water which formed the Bay of Zaneele at their feet, while on either side the Straits rose the mountains, gilded with the sweet warm sunlight. To the left, the mountains were Sicilian, to the right they were Calabrian, and, shining far up the coast of Calabria, their female guide pointed out a speck which was a rock—the dread rock of Scylla. By this latter sight was Ailie much consoled.

The Sicilian woman and the quartette parted with mutual expressions of obligation.

Mrs. Herbert's black silk and Ailie's neutral-tinted cashmere were both decorated for the *table d'hôte* that evening with the beautiful bouquets with which she had presented them. At one end of the said *table d'hôte*, a fine looking old Italian, a military man, presided in his uniform. At the other

end sat a comfortable looking English lady —one of a party of three—they made kindly advances to our party of four, and agreeable conversation ensued.

Next morning Ailie awoke soon after dawn, and rising, quietly dressed herself in wrapper and shawl, and stepped softly out into the balcony to watch the sun rise from behind the Calabrian mountains. The first herald of the king of day was a radiant wave of light on the surface of the water. Then from behind the highest mountain tops—

> "The monarch looked forth from his pavilion,
> Flinging wide
> Its curtain clouds of purple and vermillion,
> Dispensing life and light on every side."

And as Ailie gazed on the glorious sight, she repeated to herself words of Southey which she had learned in childhood, but had never before truly appreciated—

> "I marvel not, O sun! that unto thee
> In adoration man should bow the knee,
> And pour the prayer of mingled awe and love;
> For like a God thou art, and on thy way
> Of glory sheddest, with benignant ray,
> Beauty and life, and joyaunce from above."

"Joyaunce, joyaunce," reiterated Ailie, "what a nice word it is, and how well it expresses the feeling that is within me, as I stand here this December morning on this most substantial Sicilian balcony, with so much to look at spread out before me."

There was in truth very much to look at irrespective of sun and sea and mountain, and the tall masts of the many ships in the sickle-shaped harbour which were waving gently to and fro, as they might have done in their green youth when the breezes stirred them in their native forests; for the stream of human life was already surging along the quay. The country folks came pouring along with their donkeys and carts laden with fresh produce for the citizens and the sailors. There was a market-place nearly opposite Ailie's window, where many of these provisions were deposited; the unladen carts came rattling back, and were turned up on a wide space by the edge of the quay, while the freed quadrupeds were regaled on bunches of

green stuffs under the auspices of a statue of Neptune.

Other carts, long, low and sideless, came rumbling up, laden with deal boxes. White tissue papers shining between the crevices, hinted that the contents of the boxes were carefully packed oranges and lemons, *en route* for the ships which were to bear them to those luckless climes where the *arancio* and *limone* will not flourish.

Ailie watched the busy panorama with great interest, and failed not to note that the male peasants were mostly enveloped in the *cappucio*, a long brown cloak with a peaked hood drawn over the head, while the women were buried head over ears in shawls of divers stripes and colours. Many of them looked up as they passed, and smiled as they encountered the wondering gaze of the young English girl with the beautiful violet eyes.

That same day the quartette set out for Catania.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"COMPARED WITH THIS CLOUD-CAPPED ENORMITY TYPHOEUS, OUR OLD FRIEND POLYPHEMUS, THE OGRE OR FEE-FO-FUM OF ANTIQUITY BECOMES A HUMAN BEING."

"WELL, here we are again," said St. Frederick, fixing himself in his corner of the carriage. He was in excellent spirits, having received a letter that had given him much satisfaction.

"Yes, here we are in our Railway Hotel once more," said Mr. Henderson, who was also in high spirits, for he believed that he had left his enemy behind him on the Italian continent as predicted by the young stranger in the Hotel di Roma. The Sicilian sunshine suited him exactly, he took off his Ulster and rolled it up with great gusto among the *impedimenta.*

"I am getting so used to be on the move now, papa," said Ailie, "that when we get

home I shall wish we had a wooden Chicagan house on wheels, so that we might give it a push and be off whenever we liked."

"I'll buy a caravan for you, my dear. But what would Mr. Droning think if he saw Aunt Mona sitting knitting by the window of it. By-the-bye we didn't see old Droning at Messina, the little widow has dragged him somewhere else, I suppose. How very well you are looking, Mona; you have not lost your blooming colour yet."

"John, John!" was all Mrs. Herbert said in return for the compliment, but in truth it was not unmerited. A pink flush, delicate as the bloom on the peach, suffused her face even to the brow; it might be due to the exertion of knitting, for all four wires were in most active operation.

"Fred, what was it that the Contessa told us to look out for, between Messina and Catania?"

"For the Scogli dei Ciclopi."

"O yes. The Cyclopeian rocks. They are

connected in some way with Ulysses, but I forget the story. Aunt Mona, I dare say you forget it too. Papa dear, will you grant Fred a special license?"

"My dear, I'm not in Doctor's Commons."

"Papa, you really are incorrigible. I was going to say, a special license to tell us the fable about the seven Cyclopeian islands without your fining him. I know papa will grant it, Fred, he is always good when he has not the gout. I think you may begin."

"I am surprised, Ailie," said her cousin, "to think you should not remember that very fine old Sicilian Cyclopeian gentleman of the name of Polyphemus. He was quite one of the olden time. His opinions were Liberal, more especially on religious topics. It was even affirmed that he had been heard to laugh in his sleeve at the gods. His voice had a fine hearty ring in it. Sheep farming was his hobby, but he did a little amateur cannibalism now and again by way of a change. When your friend Ulysses, after distinguish-

ing himself at Troy, made a tour of the islands, and took Sicily in his way, he called on Polyphemus in his cave, with his twelve companions. Six of these gentlemen Polyphemus liked so well that he ate them. Such a six-course dinner deserved good wine to follow. Ulysses saw that Polyphemus had it. When presently Bacchus had retired in favour of Morpheus, Ulysses seized a burning stick, rammed it into the round eye of the sleeping Polyphemus, and with his six remaining friends made for his ship with all due haste. And none too soon. Polyphemus was soon wide awake with the pain in his eye. He rushed out of his cave in his blind rage. He picked up a huge rock and hurled it after the retreating ship, then another and another, seven in all. Each time he missed his aim. Ulysses escaped, but the rocks remain where they fell to tell the tale."

"Thanks, Fred," said Ailie.

"For a sweetly pretty story!" added her father. "Not a bit of me would have

granted the license if I had thought it was for telling such fee-fo-fum-and-ogre stuff as that with impunity."

"Fred," cried Ailie, excitedly from the window, "do look, these must be the very rocks."

"You are right, Ailie, for they are near Aci Castello"

The quartette found the scenery from this point to Catania very interesting. Again they were coasting the Mediterranean, but the waves on the Sicilian shore seemed to have a different roll to those which wash the edge of the Italian Continent, and the coast of Sicily differed entirely in character from the northern coast of Italy. In some parts it rose precipitously from the sea to considerable height, in others it shelved up gradually, each shelf affording a lodgement for the prickly pear and the cactus, with many other forms of vegetation. To the right were groves of orange trees and olives, with many villages set among the hills. In the distance

the snowy slopes of Etna came into view; the cone rising black from their midst—the burning mouth of the crater was also visible, but no smoke was to be seen from it at that distance.

"Looks innocent as a sleeping baby," said Mr. Henderson.

"But all these lumps of lava around us bear witness against it," replied St. Fred.

"But they must all be laid to the charge of the awful monster Typhoeus, since Etna is merely his spiracle through which he breathes forth fire and destruction, as often as he wakes himself up," said Ailie.

"Bravo, my little cousin! your classic memories revive. It is so, undoubtedly. Underneath this island lies the prostrate Typhoeus as he lay when worsted in his fight with the mighty Zeus. We will trust that our present progress over his body may not disturb him, for when he turns in his sleep 'the cities tremble.' Long, then, may his dreamless slumber last."

In a few minutes more they were at Catania. They were received by a double file of ugly loafers, who lined the way from the station to the standing point of the omnibus in waiting from the Grande Albergo. There were no other passengers, and very soon they were landed in the hotel, enrolled in the visitor's book, and located in their respective rooms.

Mr. Henderson had chosen his on the sunny side of the house, overlooking the garden, but Ailie took to the shady side for the sake of looking at Etna.

Mrs. Herbert, who had neither preferences nor antipathies one way or the other, had left it to her choice, and was glad she had done so when she saw the delight with which Ailie drank in the view from the tiny balcony outside her window. As she stepped out she caught a glimpse of the long black train of a dress just vanishing from the neighbouring balcony on the left, within the glass doors of the room next her own.

"Oh, Auntie!" cried the girl, "this is glorious. Etna looks as grand again from here as from the railway, but I wish they had not stuck that tall unsightly unfinished house just in the way over there. And, oh, dear me, did you ever see such a curious church *façade* as that one down below. Look at that droll contrivance for the bells."

"That house on the other side is quite in the Italian style," said Mrs. Herbert. "It is all painted, you see, with bright colours, and the children are playing on the flat roof."

Ailie, looking still further round to the right, beheld what appeared like a field of blue marble.

"Auntie, dear," she said triumphantly, "it is the Mediterranean!"

END OF VOL. I.

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